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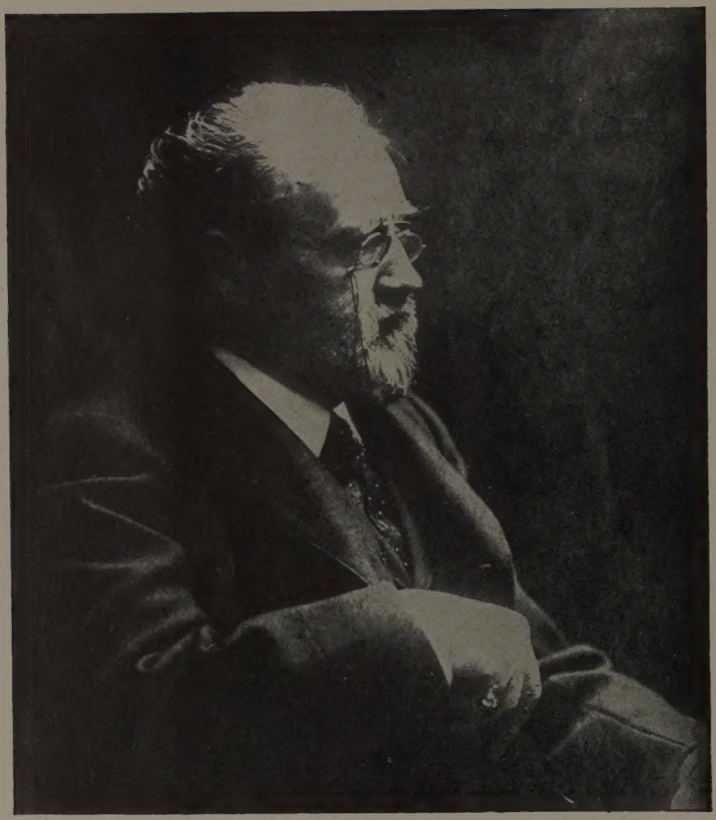
ZOLA

AND HIS TIME



EMIL ZOLA
1900

A STAR BOOK

ZOLA
AND HIS TIME

THE HISTORY OF HIS MARTIAL CAREER IN LETTERS: WITH AN ACCOUNT OF HIS CIRCLE OF FRIENDS, HIS REMARKABLE ENEMIES, CYCLOPEAN LABORS, PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS, TRIALS, AND ULTIMATE GLORIFICATION

BY

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TO THE MEMORY OF

MY FATHER

A great debt must be acknowledged by the author to the Zola family, notably to Emile Zola's daughter, Mme. Denise Le Blond-Zola, and to Maurice Le Blond, as well as to M. Léon Deffoux, who befriended this book through their generosity, their counsel and their candor.

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THE LEFT BANK OF THE SEINE

BOOK ONE

"I am a pariah—a pariah!

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGINS

ZOLA. *Zola!* . . . ZO—LA!! "How musical," say the friends of this name. There are names which seem destined to celebrity, names which go ringing on in the memory. Hugo, Balzac. Can one ever forget them once one has heard those short, harmonious words?

"But there is none," exclaims Guy de Maupassant, "which leaps more suddenly at the eye, and clings more stubbornly to the mind than Zola. It bursts like two clarion notes: *Zola!* . . . What a rousing call to the people! What good fortune to be so endowed by one's ancestors!"

Zola? murmur the enemies and detractors. Simply a variant of *zolla* which in Italian means clod or lump of earth. Well named! For indeed Emile Zola was "of the earth earthy," and loved her well.

"Ah! good earth, take me," he has cried in one of his revealing moments, "thou who art our common mother. O unique source of life, eternal and immortal, in which circulates the soul of the world, like a sap arising now in the stones and now in the trees, our great motionless brothers! . . . Yes, I desire to lose myself in thee; I feel thee down there, under my limbs pressing and arousing me; it is thou alone who shalt be as a pristine

force in my works, the end and the means at once of all things! . . ."

"Zo-la!—There is neither sonority nor glory in this name," says the enemy camp. Will these two syllables really gain posterity? "Even now, the echoes only give back in a mocking murmur, *la* . . . *la* . . ."

"And yet who," asks de Maupassant, "fought more furiously for his ideas? Who attacked more violently that which he believed unjust and false? Who triumphed more brilliantly over first, the indifference, and then the hesitant resistance of the *vast* public?

"Ah, there was an alchemy in this name," which could turn dross into gold: a name like "a battle-cry, a chant of victory, a challenge . . ."

✓ ✓ ✓

It was in fact brought to French soil for the first time, in the early part of the last century, by an adventurer who, taking a long, jagged course through Europe and Africa, paused long enough in the city of Paris for his son to be born amid the scenes of his destined triumphs.

Francesco Zola, the Italian father of Emile Zola, is an unbalanced, romantic, but always sympathetic figure. His flickering and hazardous career bestows upon the early life of the child a strangely mixed heritage; auguries of luxury and power; abrupt and agitated movements; finally, destitution, hunger, the gutter. And to round off this interesting legacy he left his son his intelligence, his imaginative zeal, his hardy blood, and some scattered personal debts, not to mention a modest skeleton-closet which, in its time, was to play its own small part in the great lines of the intrigue.

One sees, then, Francesco Zola, the civil engineer of a century ago—his whole harassed, jovial, hurdy-gurdy career—in a few essential scenes.

He was born in 1795; his mother was a Greek, from the island of Corfu, while on his father's side, he was the offspring of an old Venetian family, whose descendants, for generations, had been swordsmen under the last doges, and who had ended up as officers under Napoleon in Italy. The roots of this family-tree are interesting. In Northern Italy there were Zolas to be met a little everywhere; even a village of that name. A powerful branch juts out of the historical darkness in Lombardy. Here the Zolas ran to religion, and were great churchmen; there is an old Giovanni Battista Zola, who was a saint and martyr, centuries ago, at Brescia . . . The religious and the fighting strain, then, will combine somehow in the descent. It is no paradox. We know how they have always combined in the past.

Francesco Zola, at any rate, was trained likewise for the military career, at the Royal Academy of Pavia. At seventeen, he had got his first commission in the Royal Italian Artillery, and was fighting under Prince Eugene for Napoleon. Napoleon had been the saviour, the uniter of Italy; his disastrous fall brought misery and oppression in its train.

Francesco Zola continued his studies for five or six years during the brutal Austrian peace, in the direction of mathematics and engineering. His hope, after securing his university degree, was to become an officer of engineers like his father. But by 1820 he could bear the Austrian régime no longer. For these were the sad times of the *risorgimento* in Italy: an era of revolutionary intrigue and counterplot, assassinations and repressions, desperate and heroic failure. Venice, the indolent and artistic, in subjection and without pride, offered little to one who hoped to be a road-builder and a prospector. He would go elsewhere and stalk his fortune swiftly. He would see something of the world as well, other cities which were more progressive, had more liberty and were happier.

He became an adventurer and wanderer. He roved about central Europe, up into Holland and even England, undertaking

various construction schemes, helping to build one of the first railways, drifting from venture to venture—one of those "proletarians of science." Great plans, structures, fortifications loomed in his brain. Needy and without influence he wrote ambitious letters to monarchs, as he wandered from frontier to frontier.

One day he found himself at the edge of the Mediterranean, looking toward Africa. In his want he applied for a commission in the Foreign Legion, and received that of lieutenant. There was a flame for adventure in Francesco Zola which must burn out with his youth.

It was during the blazing month of July, 1831, that he arrived at the camp of the famous *"Lascars"* in Algeria. Here were all the foul exhalations of three continents; the troops were recruited from all the sewers of Europe. Francesco Zola lay in an idle military encampment on the edge of the desert, under the tropical sun. . .

Incident. One of thousands of dramas in the annals of the Legion.

Lieutenant Zola, in time, became infatuated with, pursued the pretty young wife of an old subaltern named Fischer. In the officers' quarters they played cards all the time. What was there to do? Out in the sand-drifts lay death; in the marches under the blinding sun, death. Here in the lazy shade at a table, beside a glass of absinthe, the hot-bloded young officer looked into the eyes of Mme. Fischer and lost steadily to Lieutenant Fischer . . . Zola was quarter-master at the moment, that is to say, responsible for certain sums in the company's treasury. Was it for this reason that Fischer, who was evidently a scoundrel of a certain well-defined type—willing cuckold shall we say?—encouraged the young officer's attentions to his wife? Then at last, having won, extorted, and no doubt borrowed under various pretexts, a considerable sum of money, the pair resolved to embark for Europe, and announced their departure.

"Let him go and you stay with me!" Lieutenant Zola pleaded.

"Follow us back to Europe," Mme. Fischer countered.

"Impossible! Unthinkable!"

They persisted. Francesco Zola, in confusion, saw them board their vessel despite his most frantic importunings. At this point there is the utmost difficulty, no matter how well-intentioned one has been, in justifying one's conduct and clearing one's honor. Out of such straits, there is but one melodramatic exit—one shudders for the splendid thread that is at point to snap!—and Zola made his way along the shore casting off his clothes and preparing to throw himself into the sea! He is followed, happily, and rescued in time: his distraught words lead to the arrest of the Fischers before their boat has lifted anchor.

In the military trial that followed, Lieutenant Fischer clearly enough offered to replace all of the missing company money, some 4,000 francs.

He must certainly not have been actuated by tenderness for his wife's lover!

Subsequent tampering with official records has made it impossible to unravel the truth of this scandal of a hundred years ago.*

A still existing letter addressed to the minister of war by the Duke of Rovigo, then commander-in-chief, relates:

* At the height of the Dreyfus Affair in 1898, more than sixty years later, certain anti-Dreyfusard newspapers acquired documents treating of the François Zola matter from the notorious Colonel Henry, and denounced Emile Zola as the son of a thief and embezzler who had been expelled from the French army and narrowly escaped death-sentence! Colonel Henry, the later dishonored Secret Service Officer, who had complete access to the archives, had furnished them with truncated and garbled papers. When after bitter opposition Emile Zola was permitted to have the archives searched for evidence in connection with a libel suit he was prosecuting, it was seen that further documents clearly listed on the cover of the portfolio for François Zola had disappeared forever. . . . It is most plausible to suppose that they at least attenuated the gravity of the affair or may even have absolved the elder Zola completely. This was evidently the feeling of the court which awarded the son damages against the *Petit Journal.* The official letter of the Duke of Rovigo (which remained intact), while not extremely clear, treats the episode with unmistakable lightness. He and the court-martial persisted in the decision to absolve François Zola.

". . . We visited the cabin of Fischer and his wife and discovered the sum of 4,000 francs in one of their trunks. They pretended at first that the money belonged to them, then confessed that 1,500 francs of it belonged to François Zola. They were taken ashore and placed in prison . . ."

So little culpable did Zola prove to be in the accounting which ensued that—in this army where the slightest crime was punished by death—he was completely exonerated and his honorable resignation accepted some time after.

Francesco Zola then embarked and landed in Marseilles. He had seen, by now, and experienced something of the world. There were lines on his round face and about his dark eyes that would never be erased. He had accomplished little for himself. He had to begin everything anew.

In this man the wanderlust had now subsided and given place to elements of courage and energy. His intelligence, wasted and beguiled in the Foreign Legion, now showed itself of the constructive type. He would look at a harbor and imagine it transformed, deepened, rendered safe from the tides; or a mountain suggested tunnels; a languishing fountain in July, great dams, reservoirs.

Marseilles, colorful and noisy seaport, first captivated his Italian soul. He established himself here as a civil engineer, opening an office and setting seriously to work on plans for civic improvements. France would become now his adopted country and Provence the field for his career. Francesco Zola became François Zola.

It must be recalled that Europe in the 1840's was undergoing in the name of science a prodigious external change. François Zola, as an engineer, leaps into the noisy torrent of progress. He spreads himself in a score of ventures, voyaging to Paris, soliciting the government, the ministers. He has moments of transient

success: the invention of a road building machine accepted by Thiers; an interview with King Louis Philippe *in re* fortifications plans. In a number of years he had expended about a hundred thousand francs, partly earned, partly inherited from his mother, when one day, like all adventurers, prospectors, hunters, he found his great stake.

Twenty miles outside of Marseilles, over rough mountain roads, one comes upon the curious old city of Aix. Once the capital of all Provence and one of the earliest stations of the Romans in Gaul, Aix was still an important provincial trade centre. In the summer, however, all this region is parched with thirst. When François Zola came to Aix, there were three elegant public fountains. It was August; and he noted that only one of them was working, and its water was tepid and unfit to drink.

The engineer's rolling eye fell upon certain natural watersheds in the mountains outside the town and imagined already their precious flood conserved and conducted to the gates of Aix by a canal.

Possessed by this scheme he decided suddenly to sit tight here. His plan as he visioned it was eminently feasible. He would make his great gamble now; he would fasten himself upon this and never let go.

The obstacles are enormous. There is not only the passiveness of the provincial French spirit toward progress and change; there is the hostility toward a man who is a foreigner, an outsider, coming to them with an important and vastly profitable venture. François Zola completes his plans; he lays siege to the local council, the prefecture, the National Government. He turns heaven and earth to support his scheme; he hangs on grimly for long months, years.

There is now an agreeable interlude.

The legends of this remarkable man maintain in somewhat Dantesque fashion that, on a visit to Paris, he fell in love with his lady as she was issuing from church. She was Françoise-

Emilie Aubert, very pretty, simple in manner and half his age. She was the daughter of a poor tradesman who had no *dot* to give! The romantic engineer, then forty-three years old, dropped all other occupations, followed her, and ascertaining her home and her parents, laid suit for several weeks. It ended in a love match.

Emilie Aubert had been born and bred in the little town of Dourdan, not far from Paris, and situated in the Ile-de-France, that central province which is veritably the "Core-of-France." She had the vitality, the methodical durability, the *terre-à-terre* sense of realities, of the profoundly French peasants and tradespeople of that region.

Married in Paris on March 16, 1839, the engineer soon resumed the jagged tempos of his existence. Joying in his young wife, knowing perhaps a brief period of exalted tranquility, as he coursed about the world, he bore her now swiftly toward the early-blossoming spring of Aix, in Provence, where he resumed work on the canal project.

A year later saw them back in Paris again. Mme. Zola had conceived a child in the South, and so this time instead of stopping in furnished rooms her husband had hired a large and decent apartment at 10 rue St. Joseph, which they furnished themselves. Mme. Aubert came down from Dourdan, nearby, to attend her daughter.

Although the house had been newly built, the rue St. Joseph, a narrow lane-like street, was buried in one of the oldest and noisiest quarters, in the very heart of Paris. Only a step away was the large and animated St. Joseph's market, vibrating under a single flaring gas-jet. And nearby there was the Bourse, clangorous with financial war in the daytime; and not far from here were the great Central Halls, the food markets of Paris, which Emile Zola called "The Belly of Paris."

It was here, on the night of April 2, 1840, at eleven o'clock, that Emile Zola leaped clamorously into the world.

Ah, a boy! A boy! The grandmother laid him on a small camp-chair beside the bed. A name, a long series of names was all ready for him: Emile-Edouard-Charles-Antoine Zola.

This child, born a Parisian, though conceived in Provence, had the blood of three races in his veins: French through his mother, and Italian and Greek through his father. He has been called "a cactus of Provence sprouted between the paving-stones of Paris." For it was in the South, at Aix, that nearly all of his childhood and youth was spent, in a land of olive trees, palms, and ilexes, with violently blue skies, amid a languid and dark-eyed people who roll their r-r-r-s fearfully. Externally the strain of his mother dominated; in his less distinguished moods, when he would relapse into himself dismally, you would call him a little French functionary . . . But latent, there would be the Romance strain of his father, the lyrical, struggle- and hazard-loving nature. He was in fact, a "Ligurian, like Caesar and like Napoleon, nourished along the tepid shores of the meridional sea . . . one of the great line of Mediterranean races . . ."

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For nearly two years the business of François Zola held him in Paris. Then, returning to Aix, the engineer established himself there, and plunged into a long battle with the land barons and the neighboring villages who opposed the right of way of the new canal.

The Zolas were lodged now in a long, rambling house in the Impasse Sylvaçanne, which was situated in the newer "bourgeois" quarter of Aix. It had formerly been occupied by a famous native son of Aix, then Prime-Minister, Thiers. This old provincial city lived somnolently in the memory of her brilliant past, boasting still an archbishopric, colleges, lovely baroque fountains, and handsome boulevards from which the distant red wall of mountains that girdled her loosely could be glimpsed. Aix was in fact a kind of Versailles of the South, and still a seat of the

old landed nobility, whose beautiful and old white mansions jostled coldly with the adjacent new bourgeois quarter, on the one hand, and the grimy *faubourgs* on the other. The chief trade in almonds and olives was pursued noisily in the business sections, but at the slower pace of a provincial town. And at evening the gates of the mediaeval wall which still encircled Aix were closed, to be opened only with extreme reluctance to late stragglers.

Emile-Edouard-Charles-Antoine was a happy and greatly indulged young savage. He had been dangerously sick, to be sure, at the age of two, and his anguished parents had seen him nearly expire of a brain fever. Thanks to this his gaze was rather myopic, and his left eye slightly raised above his right. As he grew toward boyhood he recovered slowly from the delicacy of health and the sluggishness that had resulted from his lymphatic condition. In the large garden, outside of the low, rose-covered house in the Impasse Sylvaçanne, he bloomed like a wild vine. No one had tutored or spanked him. There had been too little time during the brusque movements of the Zola fortunes. His great joy had been to play alone, tearing and soiling his clothes, climbing trees, rolling on the lawn in the warm sunlight.

A family portrait and an old daguerreotype dating from his early boyhood, show him, round-faced and plump in figure, with full lips, brown eyes like his father, a similarly large head with thick black hair, and a high round forehead.

When his father would return from one of his trips, the household would ring with an Italian joviality. François Zola would talk long and animatedly of his projects. He lived, then, largely and borrowed much of the future. His instruction of his son was jocular and breezy. Taking him upon his knee, he would try to coach him out of the habit of lisping.

"Say *saucisson!*" he would cry.

"*Thauthithon!*"

"And now say *cochon!*" continued the rollicking father. And when Emile burst out with a loud and clear "*cochon*" at length, the father exploded with laughter and gave him a bright new five-franc piece.

Thus, one of the first significant utterances of Emile Zola, in earliest infancy, was a strong word.

On one occasion, however, the child remembered the return of his father from Paris in a joy that was by no means visionary. They had lived in Aix for nearly three years now, and there had come at last the royal ordinance decreeing the Zola Canal a "public utility."

This was late in 1846, and as work began in the hills outside of Aix, a commencement holiday was held by all the townspeople. Emile remembered long after the joyful public scene on the site of the future dam, to which his father had brought him, that he might witness and recall forever the day of their triumph.

François Zola was fifty-one and still possessed of his full vigor. The ten-years' struggle to begin the canal was now over. There was time yet to complete the long work; he was full of hope and undiminished energy.

Then, one February morning, only three months later, as he worked in one of the gorges along the site of the dam, the *mistral*, that cold wind which is the scourge of southern France, came up the valley and struck him down.

Thinking that he had only caught a cold, the ill-starred man had gone on without caring for himself, to Marseilles, in the company of his wife, in order to attend to his business for two more days. But in the night, at the cheap and sordid little hotel where he usually stopped, pleurisy set in and he began to cough horribly. A doctor, summoned, warned against moving him from his bed.

These were fearful hours for Mme. Zola, as she afterward retold them to her son. Above the groans of the dying man could

be heard, through the thin partitions of the room, the coarse jests and laughter of transient guests in the hotel.

"She did not know any of the streets in this town, knew nothing even of the quarter in which they were lodged; and during a week, she had remained imprisoned with the dying man, while the city roared under their window, feeling herself alone, abandoned, lost, as if in the depths of solitude. And when she again descended to the street, she was a widow. The thought of that great bare chamber, filled with medicine bottles, with things scattered pell-mell on chairs, and the trunks, scarcely unpacked, made her shudder for long years after . . ."

François Zola died raving tragically of his foundered dreams.

The body was transported to Aix, and all the officials of the town came out to honor the dead man. In the elaborate funeral procession, there marched a chubby and incredulous spectator, the child of six who though chief mourner, was little aware of what was going on for him, or what death was, or even who this strangely departed man was, since he had known him all too little.

The visionary engineer had been struck down at a most awkward moment. Moving from one venture to another, there was nothing tangible left for his heirs, since all the caravans of the future foundered with his dying brain. But the "Zola Canal" surely—although others would necessarily complete it—his wife and child would reap a share of its inestimable benefits to the Aixois!

There was a period of hesitation. The young widow sought with fumbling hands to bring some order out of the scattered affairs left her. She had her father and mother come to Aix to live with them. They were still living in the spacious and lavishly furnished home of the Impasse Sylvaçanne. There were servants. She discharged them. The grandmother, Mme. Aubert, keen-eyed and energetic for all her seventy years, took in hand

he care of the household; while her daughter took measures, vith the counsel of lawyers, to protect the family's interests in he matter of the Canal, the progress of which now underwent n immense and baffling delay. A complicated settlement on behalf f the Zola heirs as well as the other stock-holders must now be egotiated . . .

But, in the meantime, what was to be done with Emile?

Left entirely alone, now, he thumped and tumbled through he large rooms upstairs, overturning the furniture, ransacking ne chests with a great fracas; or he would climb down to arass the grandmother in the kitchen, until he was bribed with isses and sweets to stay out in the garden again.

Contemplating this affectionate, sensitive, but in no way prom-sing child, the mother and grandparents would shed sentimental ears over him. Poor thing! They must be kind to him at all osts. One must never cross a fatherless child, they murmured uperstitiously.

Emile, at seven, had not the slightest acquaintance with the lphabet. And, rejecting the idea of the common school, the grand-nother had put on her hat and gone out to find a pension. It was the modest institution of the very old and worthy Master Isoard nat Emile, bitter and rebelliously weeping, was first led. But ne white-bearded and brown-faced old schoolmaster was gentle ith him, and five happy years had soon passed for him at the ension Isoard. The children of the *petit bourgeois* who were sent this modest primary school, grew up slowly here, filling the zy, hot afternoons with the pleasant buzzing of their voices as ey droned their lessons.

It was not long after this, Emile recalled, that his family ad moved from the centre of town to a smaller house at the utskirts, almost in the open fields. Here he had the open country efore him, and above all, the river Torse, a picturesque and inding stream, "a torrent in December, the shiest of rivulets in uly." By its banks he often played the truant with two friends

he had made at the pension, Marius Roux and Philippe Solari. To them the gentle declivities of the shaded Torse seemed like a wild gorge . . .

He was aware also at times of an increasing gloom in his house. All their pretentious possessions and furniture had been sold. Their table was scanty at times. The sous were closely watched. Upon small sums extended by Aix in settlement of claims the widow had put in, and upon the tiny annuity of the grandparents, the family lived now in decent but greatly reduced quarters. The two women were obliged to do all the heavy work. Month after month, Emile could witness the bitter pursuit of the five-franc piece, the rigid effort to extend its resources to incredible limits. Often he partook of the family counsels now.

The gloom that hung over this house he associated particularly with one night of great commotion in the city. The *coup d'état* of Napoleon III had followed the upheavals of '48. Overnight Bonaparte had fallen upon the Republic and strangled it. Insurrection had flamed up in Provence, where workingmen and peasants gathered their forces to combat the new despotism. One night through their shuttered windows there came the sounds of marching and firing; the ragged horde of "reds" took possession of Aix. Then on another night they marched away singing their native song, the *Marseillaise,* to a bloody ambuscade in which they were all destroyed. There were reprisals and proscriptions . . .

In the upheavals that followed 1851, as the new administration of Napoleon took over Aix, the prospects of the Zola family had become even darker. Their claims on the Canal project, which Minister Thiers had in a measure befriended, were all but disavowed now that he was fled. The widow had struggled with obstinate hope and courage, through a long legal suit, whose cost could scarcely be borne now; she had made many trips to Marseilles and to Paris to advance the suit. Now new interests took up the "Zola

Canal," as it was still called, and offered to settle with her for a small sum.

A deep depression fell over this household which the boy could scarcely ignore. It was the state of mind which looked to ever dwindling resources. For ten years, between the age of ten and twenty, his home was to be overcast with disappointment and increasing penury. The sadness of his home must have left traces upon his impressionable mind, such that late in life no triumphs could erase.

More and more they came to look upon this boy as their only hope for the future.

With this last sum of money, Mme. Zola resolved that he must be educated; he must be sent to the *Collège* of Aix; he must gain the diploma, which in Europe is the "open Sesame" of all official careers. He must work hard. Perhaps he would be as great as his father was; and, they prayed, more fortunate!

His mother and grandmother now confided to him the discouraging state of affairs. He knew now how much poorer he was than his playmates. In a vague way the boy realized that he must soon pit himself alone against the world, and felt a thrill of fear and self-pity at the strange thought.

He was twelve, and the family strained their resources in order to permit him to become a full boarder at the college of Aix. They moved to even poorer and smaller quarters at the rue de Bellegarde in order to be nearer to him.

CHAPTER II

BOYHOOD AT AIX

THE *Collège* of Aix, called the *Collège Bourbon*, had been formerly a convent. Situated at the edge of the town, its dank old walls extended as far as the ramparts. It had a forbidding front, with its dark chapel, its grimly barred windows, and the grilled gate of the porter where the students would knock timidly when they came late for classes. The building faced a quiet little square, in the centre of which was the fountain of the Four Dolphins, rococo little monsters, who twisted their stony tails fiercely, and whose eternally open mouths emitted a feeble jet of water.

Within the gates was the great square courtyard, shaded by four fine plane trees; and in the centre of this was a large fountain, "a slimy, sedge-covered pond," where Emile and his companions first learned to swim. In the smaller yard nearby were the trapezes, swings, and parallel bars. The studies of the ground floor were gloomy and airless; their plaster walls dripped with moisture. Above, the class-rooms were gayer and brighter, their windows giving on pretty flower gardens. Then there was the refectory, with its stench of dirty dishwater; and the small boys' dormitory, famous for its horrors to the childish mind. Near this was the infirmary, tended by gentle sisters in broad black gowns and white hoods.

Into this odd public school of the provinces, where the classical studies were not very rigorously pursued, and where a paternal discipline prevailed, Emile Zola entered, timid, oppressed by its strangeness, a little older than his class-mates, and without friends to shield him from their brutal pranks.

He was placed in the seventh form, the last but one. His companions soon found the "new boy" touchy, inclined to stay apart, and quite frozen to his text-books. With the cruelty of children, they learned quickly to single out this boy who found it so difficult to make friends and rarely resorted to the "thee" and "thou" of intimacy with them.

They imitated his lisping with derision, and mocked his accent, which, since his mother was a Beauceronne, from the centre of France, seemed Parisian and foreign to them.

"*Franciot!*" or "*Frenchy*" they called him in their slang.

The *palmarès* of Aix *Collège* recorded first and second prizes during Zola's first year, in history, geography, recitation and translation from Latin. But since he was almost two years older than the other boys, it was not surprising; and scholastic standards were mediocre here, as we shall see.

He was methodical at his studies; he would do his appointed work; but he would also throw up his books gladly once it was done.

The instructors were absurd and pathetic figures, bearing their cross with hatred and suffering. All of them were besmirched by the foul nicknames which these vicious little Provençal students gave them: "Rhadamantus," who had never been known to smile; "Filth," who by constantly rubbing his head against the wall, had left his particular mark behind every desk he had occupied; "Thou-hast-deceived-me-Adèle!" the professor of physics at whom "ten generations of schoolboys had tauntingly flung the name of his unfaithful wife. . . ."

Among these rough, loud-spoken boys, who were terribly passionate about their games, Zola was learning his first oaths, his

first obscenities. These children of the Midi, under the hot sun leap quickly to adolescence. They throw themselves headlong into furtive misdemeanors; they form bands—the day-students, against the boarders; or the boys of the farther *faubourgs* against the town-boys, and there are terrible encounters, pitched battles fought with stones, in which the gladiators all but render up their souls.

During his sixth form, Emile was only a day-student, coming home in the evening for dinner and sleeping at home, owing to the ever greater penury of his family. One of his professors, too, had conceived a dislike for him, he felt, and appeared to discriminate against him in the class-room, something which is terribly wounding to the pride at the impressionable age of thirteen, and whose deep smart, which of us can ever forget?

If he appeared now shy and mistrustful, as he would later be gruff and suspicious, it was no less true now than then, that to those who touched his heart he gave himself freely. For now, he found a friend who understood him.

"He was a stubborn rascal," Cézanne tells us; " a pensive sufferer, whom these *gamins* love to hate and persecute. For a mere nothing they would fall upon him and try to cut him into forty pieces."

Cézanne had come to know him during a mixup in which "the whole yard of large and small boys belabored poor Zola for some breach of the code . . . I broke the rules: I could not help going up and saying a word to him, afterward; and it cost me dearly. The next morning he brought me a big basket of apples! Ah, ha! Cézanne's apples go far, far back, you see!"

Shrinking as he had been with the others, Zola now gave himself as a "brother" to Cézanne, and the latter's friend, Baille. They became the "three inseparables." In the swifter tempo of later years Zola could still reflect only with the utmost sentimentality on their life together. It is in a deeply romantic strain that he speaks of it again and again—as a boyhood that was

nore naturally emotional, more passionate, more *chivalrous* even, han boyhood in later epochs, or in colder, northern regions.

"Sprung from three different classes of society, by no means imilar in character, but simply happening to have been born in he same year, we had become friends at once and forever, mpelled by a secret affinity, the promptings of vague common mbitions . . ."

These three friends grew up in such terribly close bonds that hey withdrew more and more from the others. The years of boyood which sped by now were almost "savage," as Zola recalls hem. They lived for each other, confiding and confirming the ommon dreams rising in them. Their elders were perhaps unware of how fearfully strong and real their fantasies were beoming, of how much they were ruled by them! It was not as in he greater cities or capitals where children learn precociously to mulate the desires or submissions of older persons, and boyood is something oppressed or thwarted. They grew up veritably t their own will, preparing for themselves an awful interlude f disillusionment when the free child is transformed into the ubject, social man.

Together they would roam about the town; they would "lizard" n the sunlight along the ramparts, by the "chimney of Good King René" as these old ivy-clad walls are known. And on occasions hey would shelter themselves there when the mistral thundered y, "buffeting houses, carrying away roofs, dishevelling the trees, nd raising great clouds of dust, while the sky became a livid lue and the sun turned ashen pale."

The three boys affected to despise their townspeople. They ould go to plays whenever there was a one franc piece to get hem into the pit, whence they could see the standard tragedies er and over again. But from the cafés where provincial youth s made sodden by card playing, where the same newspapers are ead through from beginning to end, where the same boys throw own their bags on the same marble-topped tables, and grow

stupefied amid dull gossip and banter—from all this they fled t the open air.

For nine or possibly ten months of the year it is warm i this land. The full sun beats down relentlessly upon the tow and the fields. They would be out of town in a few minute marching in Indian file across the neighboring country. The would go on marauding expeditions, and like the young Latin they were, plunder onion and garlic beds along their way. The would find water holes and swim and putter about in them. The would spend whole days in such places, or, during the summer by the banks of the Arc, a rushing stream which waters the low lying plains around Aix. Stark naked, they would dry them selves in the sun, stretched out on the burning sand, lying fo whole long hours on their backs or their stomachs as they wrig gled about among the reeds or scanned the river-bed for the hiding places of eels. The constant contact of the water under the glarin sun of Provence seemed to prolong their childhood, so that whe they returned to town, still sweltering in its mid-summer sunset they would go clattering with the joyous laughter of urchins, al though they were nearly young men.

It was the planned "excursions" which they made by them selves that the three friends loved above all things. Either Zol or Cézanne would wake up before dawn on Sundays and run t call the others by throwing pebbles against the persiennes. B sunrise they would be galloping over the hills several mile out of town. Cézanne already carried colors and a brush, an made little bits of landscape for them. Besides, they had learne to be hunters, although the whole region was devoid of any rea game. They would trudge a dozen miles to pick off a few petty chaps or fig-peckers. They would march gaily along the endles white roads, covered with layers of fine dust which looked lik snow. Then they would suddenly cut across the fields, over th red-brown ochreous soil, which offered not a shadow anywhe

gainst the blazing sky of molten lead, nothing but stunted and parse olive and almond trees whose branches were twisted into ositions of suffering and revolt. They would go careening on and n madly, as if the heat had overcome them.

It is all striking country, in the environs of Aix, with historic astles and ruins, inhabited by "*demon spirits*." There are tower-ng hills and wild gorges, as well as stretches of plain through hich the Arc and the Torse flow. From these plains one could e "far off, like dots on the bare, stripped hills, white-walled oisters, flanked by dark, bar-like cypresses."

The Infernet Gorge, near the site of the Zola Canal, was "a arrow defile between giant walls of rock which the sun had aked and gilded. Pines had sprung up in the clefts. Plumes of ees which from far below seemed no larger than shrubs, fringed e crests and waved above the chasm. It was a perfect chaos; ith its many sudden twists, its streams of blood red soil pour-g from gashes in its sides, its desolation and silence, disturbed ly by eagles high above, it all looked like some spot riven by e bolts of heaven, some gallery of hell."

They were fifteen now, and adolescence began with its vertig-ous longings, its dizzy skips and leaps of the heart. In their apsacks, for their excursions, the three boys packed among the rlic, the mutton-joints, the salads, volumes of their poets, Hugo d Musset. Baille would light a fire with dry sticks; Zola would ng the *gigot* above the fire, agitating it from time to time with string; Cézanne would be getting the salad ready in a wet napkin. en after lunch there would be a siesta, from which they would art off on their absurd hunts.

"Our century suckled at the breast of romanticism," Zola ied later. Romanticism was in the air that was inhaled, and was unquestionably absorbed as is skepticism or materialism by the uth of today.

Rousseau during the Eighteenth Century had made his age

oppose cold analysis with the intuition of the senses, and discove in the heart and the imagination the new sources of poetry or of th good life. Man is by nature good, he trumpeted, and it is only false civilization which corrupts him.

France, all Europe had been moved by the ideas of this sensua and mystical Swiss. Revolution upon revolution had followed upo his prophecies. The stiff and formal love of the seventeenth cen tury was replaced with livid and volcanic passions. It was: "I fee before I think!" instead of: "I think, therefore I live."

Perhaps at this final stage of the movement, romanticism rep resented more nearly a mingled belief in the grandeur of th human spirit and the implacability of nature. Against too materia and mortal surroundings the poets of the "West Wind" and th "Legend of the Century" exalted their longing for ideal things ideal loves, heroic gestures.

For the period, Victor Hugo represented the full flower o poetry. His verses were of a great sustained breath and a nobl music, in which the grotesque and the terrifying existed side b side with the gracious. Hugo had enriched the language greatl while freeing all the forms of literature. His works were as yet therefore, forbidden the class-room.

Now the three friends no longer walked alone. They had dis covered Victor Hugo, whose dramas "haunted us like splendi visions. As we left our class-rooms, our minds frozen with classica tirades that we were compelled to learn by heart, it was a veri table debauch for us, full of trembling ecstasy, as we recited scene from 'Ruy Blas' and 'Hernani' . . ."

Echoes of the gaudy career of Hugo reached them and stirre them vaguely. The violent outburst of the romantic movement i 1830 with the production of "Hernani" in Paris; the long-haire and gaily costumed romantic battalions; the world-success o "Nôtre Dame"; the red days of '48, and the exiling of Hugo, whe Louis Napoleon strangled the short-lived Republic; the long due between a poet and a Caesar, as Hugo from the rocks of Guernse

alled upon the people to rise against Napoleon. How could one orget these scenes; they became part of one's memories of boyood. Emile Zola reading his forbidden books, memorizing whole cts of his poetic dramas, would march back with his friends rom their wanderings in the country to the cadences of Hugo's erses.

And then they discovered Musset, the lover of George Sand, he poet of youth, "the cherub, glorious at eighteen, crushed and hrough with life at thirty,"—he, feeling, aspiring, dreaming, and hinking not, was again the true Rousseau man.

"One day, one of us turned up with a volume of Musset . . . he reading of him meant for us the awakening of our own earts. We were left trembling. Our cult for Hugo received a eavy blow. Little by little his lines departed from our minds, is books were no longer to be found between our rifles and ellets. Alfred de Musset alone reigned over our knapsacks."

Far off in Paris the whole capital was being rebuilt by Naoleon III. An army toiled. Machines pounded and shrieked. he industrial revolution was in full blast. Railroads were built; teamships were launched. Factories and mills sprang up throughut the land; great department stores in the cities, the thunderng public press reflected the new mass life. Millions of people rubbed for their living or sandbagged each other. But nothing f the modern age of which Zola was to be the historian could enetrate as yet through the thick and roseate aura of romanticism hich enveloped his provincial youth.

It was in the air and the manner of Musset that Zola began o write his first poems!

His earliest work, written at thirteen in his study at the *Collège Bourbon* had been a romance of knights and damsels of e Middle Ages, inspired by Michelet's "History of the Crusades." mpossible to determine its value, since the manuscript is in a ompletely illegible hand.

Now he set to writing narrative poems, and poetic discourses,

and finally a comedy in three acts, in verse, called, *Enfoncé le Pion* ("The Usher Outwitted"): the villain being the principal enemy of his daily composure in the class-room. Alas! Emile Zola's first flights won no laurels. But it was a new intoxication to discover these wings.

Then the three, going off to some wild spot in the country would communicate the palpitations of their hearts to each other. Once they hit on the idea of going to stay all night at a cave in the surrounding mountains. It was an immense natural cavity between two enormous rocks, a deep cleft which narrowed as it disappeared into the side of the mountain. At nightfall they made their beds of wild-thyme and lavender, and lay talking ardently of their bourgeoning longings. Suddenly a storm came up, and a terrible wind began whistling and howling through the cleft above their heads. Strange screechings and cries could be heard about them; by the moonlight they could see huge bats flying about, and they began to feel very sick. Forced to renounce their romantic asylum, they set fire to their bed of boughs, and made their way back to town at two in the morning. The terrified bats escaped with great shrieks like Shakespearean witches, and the side of the mountain could be seen for miles lit up by this nocturnal beacon-fire.

The first love affairs too were faltering and awkward things, drenched in sentimentality. Speechless, Zola or Cézanne would follow some girl for days, unable to approach her, unable to utter their adolescent adoration, blushing and almost swooning from the tittering of onlookers.

A strange custom of this region must be related. The prelude to courtship in this part of Provence consisted of the boy and girl seeing each other secretly every night. Fearing the compromising laughter of onlookers in a town where everybody knew everybody else, these meetings began at dusk and continued to midnight. The couples, shielded by darkness, could thus promenade to their heart's content, but if they once sat down, and ceased for a few moments to go pounding through the streets and roads of the

own, or its *faubourgs*, the good name of one more maiden was onsidered lost the next morning. For there were plenty to distinuish the couples, plenty who could perceive the form of their lothes, or their stride. However, since it was all in darkness one could take these affairs seriously. The Provençal girls of his time wore a great cape or cloak, which wrapped them around rom head to foot; this wide robe they could fling about their ompanion, and thus concealed walk arm in arm, kissing and emracing each other. It was a common sight after nightfall on sumher evenings to see these swathed couples promenading slowly bout the sequestered paths of the town.

From these encounters the boys would return to relate to each ther in rapturous whispers, their inventions, discoveries, progress. ola dreamed now, in the rhapsodical vein of the century, of meeting beautiful maidens in his rambles . . ."

There was an old abandoned cemetery outside of Aix, whither hese lovers especially repaired at sunset. From an old graveone here Zola acquired the name of some "Nina" which he gave his imaginary love, and later transformed to the "Ninon" of is first book, *Contes à Ninon*. Or there was "*Gratienne*" who ith her raven tresses, started up from behind the wall of the los Chartreuse, in the half-light, and vanished strangely on her ay to some unreal tryst.

Willingly, Zola sought refuge in a grateful cloud of romantic lusions. And gratefully it cushioned his early years, although e awakening was rendered thereby all the more cruel. Peraps in the rage of disillusionment he would proceed with even reater extravagance in a counter-revolt? The seed of romanticism, herited from his Italian father, and nurtured in the torrid Midi, ould take shape in a new and more threatening guise?

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The home of the Zolas and the Auberts in the meantime had ndergone a gradual descent in the scale of life. They had moved

to the Cours Minime, a very restricted apartment, in the poor quarter of Aix. But soon this had to be given up, and while Emile was in his third form they had moved to the rue Mazarine, overlooking the *barri*, a dreary lane which encircled the edge of the town. On one side were the crumbling ruins of the city walls, and on the other the sordid rubble-built houses of the workingmen.

Here the last objects of value were sold. They suffered hunger, and forgot the taste of the white bread of better days. Emile was aware only too well of what lengths the two women had gone to in order to keep him in school. He knew that they counted on his finishing his studies in two more years and then finding decent work that could support them, once he had his baccalaureate. Knowing that, he merely despatched his lessons without great taste for them; he feared the future vaguely. A heavy gloom had settled over his family.

"*Ah, quelle sale race!*" his mother would exclaim bitterly, of the Provençaux who had defrauded them.

In the midst of this, old Mme. Aubert, his grandmother, who had been so resourceful and cheering, passed away in the two-room hovel of the rue Mazarine.

Black ruin now fell on them. The legal suit against the town of Aix came to a complete halt, owing to lack of money for attorneys. They were heavily in debt, and there was virtually nothing more to sell.

Zola would escape from this crushed household, to wander with Cézanne and Baille, and exchange commiserations and tepid dreams of future glory with them. He had developed already a faculty for idealizing his unhappiness, and placing himself in the midst of a vague and imaginary drama which suppressed the common-place realities. His friends too were unhappy. Baille longed to become a poet; epics buzzed in his brain. Life would soon extinguish whatever of the poet there was in him. Cézanne, too, longed alternately to become a painter or a poet; and his

ther was strongly opposed to all such ideas. Nobody would say word for his first sketches and daubings.

Zola's more mottled record hereafter as a student, relates a istaste for Latin and the classics, and for rhetoric. At the begin- ng of his second form, he "bifurcated" or elected, as between ience and letters, the sciences. His achievements were not bad; it he had already lost interest in the classroom; he was com- etely involved in the modern literature of Hugo, Musset, Lamar- ne and de Vigny, and impatient with everything else.

"I who know little Latin and no grammar," he says of him- lf in a letter of this time to Baille.

"I was a better Latinist than Zola," Cézanne boasted amus- gly, a long time after. He wrote little poems in Latin too.

Cézanne suggested more temperament than the others at this eriod, and seemed more likely to bolt from his traces. And how erfectly natural it is at this time to find his devoted friend, Emile ola, sermonizing to him.

"He would preach to me by the hour," Cézanne recalled, and sometimes we would fly into great tempers. But we always nded good naturedly by embracing each other."

Timid and stiff with strangers, Zola was capable of rising to certain eloquence and logic with his friends, and he often over- uled them. It is very jolly to recall Zola, a devout enemy of ma- erialism! He would return ecstatic from these talks with Cézanne nd Baille, the partially digested ideas of the time whirling in is head—to the grimy reality of the rue Mazarine.

One night he found his mother in tears. She was at the end f her resources, and had come to the decision of using her last ew francs to go to Paris and solicit the former friends of Fran- ois Zola for aid. This was in February, 1858. She left the next orning, and after a week Zola received a letter asking him to oin her.

"We cannot go on living in Aix," she wrote. "Sell the four ieces of furniture left. With the money realized you should have

at least enough for a third class ticket to Paris for you and your grandfather. Hurry. I am waiting for you."

There was an end to this beatific existence. Zola, who had spent most of his eighteen years in the sun-flooded country of Provence, was full of forebodings.

And yet even this last hard stroke of fortune in the affairs of his family, was turned to romantic usage. He forgets that they are going to Paris to pound the pavements and to eke out a meager existence. He thinks only of Paris, brimming with opportunity. To the provincial, Paris was and always is the "city of light," the metropolis of the world. It is the theatre of the national destiny. Gilded palaces lined both sides of the great river. In their visions the "three inseparables" had dreamed of glory only in Paris.

The torrid romanticism of these provincial youths would permit them to conceive only the most grandiose schemes. The one would dream for a time only of painting canvases that could fill the sides of a vast hall. The other of writing colossal epics, in a style that was torrential. Though bitterly crushed or thwarted in turn, could these dreams ever be abandoned? They might be laid away; but if the chance came, Zola would not ask for some humble portfolio? With a flaming ambition, he would demand whole armies, whole navies, would he not?—

Zola went off on one last excursion with Baille and Cézanne along the site of the great dam which his father had planned. It was dusk, and in the dying sun the white ruins of the convent of the Jas de Bouffan, on the hill far off, made the surrounding depressions seem like lakes of blood. His heart swelled with self-pity as he thought that he was leaving this strangely beautiful Provence forever, perhaps; that he was eighteen; that his boyhood lay behind him.

Embracing his two friends he burst into easing tears.

Then he exclaimed solemnly: "We shall meet again in Paris!"

CHAPTER III

STUDENT YEARS IN PARIS

'ARIS at this moment was undergoing a series of convulsions. It 'as nothing new, since the pavements bore the stains of periodic evolutions and barricade fights.

The city was under a reign of terror conducted by the ruthless eneral Espinasse, ever since the attempt on the life of Napoleon I by three Italian "anarchists," Orsini, Pieri and Rudio. The ress was muzzled completely, and the enemies of the despot were anished or silent.

For the past five years, Napoleon, although impeded at times y foreign wars, had been occupied with the transformation of e old Paris into the "newest and most beautiful city in the orld." This vast work of destruction and rebuilding was being arried out by Baron Haussmann, the "great destroyer." Old landarks were demolished, owners and shopkeepers were expro-riated, the narrow, twisted streets of the old quarters were idened into broad thoroughfares up which, it was whispered, the rtillery of the Empire could be rushed at a minute's notice. The l Latin Quarter especially, near where Zola came to live, that byrinth of alleys and lanes radiating from the mediaeval Mongne Sainte-Geneviève, where students, bohemians, and fakirs eld forth in grimy dens and legendary table-d'hôtes, where you

could meet Murger's *Mimi*—all this was now almost completel cleaned up. Out of this travail, involving a hundred thousan laborers, billions of francs, and a swarm of parasites and spec ulators who feasted on the attendant "graft," a new city emerged with a new Opera, broad avenues, parks, public-squares offerin perspectives on palaces and old monuments, new bridges, ne mansions, all brilliantly lit up by lines of thousands of new gas lamps. Thus Paris became the "City of Light," literally, and "th most *modern* city in the world."

I dwell on this, because Zola arriving now from the province at the impressionable age of eighteen, was stunned by the new an garish metropolis of the Second Empire. At bottom he was en chanted; the whole glittering picture haunted his brain for fort years. The voice of this city became as the chorus of a Gree drama in his books.

He had the dim memory of having been here twice: once whe he was an infant of nearly six; and again at ten, for a few month when he had lived with a relative who was a workingman.

"Now I had a sense of profound stupefaction," he related.

It was an evening of February in 1858 when he descended wit his grandfather from the omnibus at 63 rue Monsieur-le-Prince on the left bank of the Seine. All the possessions they had in th world amounted to a little light baggage which they had brough with them.

He had no idea of what was to come. Work perhaps? He ha no idea of where or how to begin.

After he had wept and embraced his mother, he asked he sadly:

"Well, and what now?"

"Well," was the answer, "you can continue your studies here I have been to see M. Labot, and he promised that he would d something for you."

Mme. Zola had simply come to the point where she must fin

vork herself to feed her son and her aged father. There was no noney for school, but M. Labot, the lawyer, an old friend of her husband, who held an important official position, was pulling wires o get the boy a scholarship at the Lycée Saint-Louis. He had ecommended Emile to M. Désiré Nisard, then Dean of the Ecole Normale. Thanks to this high recommendation, Emile entered he second form of the Lycée St. Louis, in the department of ciences.

How different this was from the Lycée at Aix! Unlike the igorant and turbulent bandits of Provence, his class-mates were ow precocious young Parisians, not much better at heart, more erious under a mask of fine irony, reserved, *au courant* with verything in the newspapers, keen for fashions, and brimming vith the vaudeville-gossip then in vogue.

"Older than they, he felt himself inferior, awkward, backward n his knowledge, and frightened." And then a curious thing hapened. At Aix, the humorists of his school had called him "*franiot*" and "Parisian"; now at Paris, the collegians finding the ccent of the Midi in him, called him, "the Marseillais," a term hich calls up something of the wandering organ-grinder, the oor Italian fruit-vender. More than ever Zola felt himself poor nd alone!

He made no new friends. Sombre and immersed in himself e lived at the Lycée St. Louis, regretting his Provence and his hildhood, thinking of his old friends.

"Ah! If only Cézanne were here! If I could only talk to aille!"

He lost much of his already feeble interest in his studies. He ho had been first or second in his classes at Aix, was now fifenth and twentieth. Everything was much "harder," in Paris; nd then, Emile would cut classes. He became negligent, slugish. He would scarcely deign to "recite" when called on.

"To tell the truth," he relates himself, "I was already eneshed in literature: I was writing my first poems, and I was

completely lost in readings of Rabelais, of Montaigne, Hugo and Musset."

If the student Zola did not pay attention to much beyond "composition," he read much. In these shadowy class-rooms of Paris where the professor gives his course before fifty or more pupils sitting on rising tiers of benches, like an amphitheatre, attention and effort are not compulsory. Down below, at his desk, the professor talks or reads by his green lamp. In the uneven light, yonder, Zola far up the tiers, is hunched over a volume of George Sand which rests on his knees.

He fell completely under the sway of the romantic literature of his period, a literature of youth and fantasy, ranging from sentimental tears to the madness of passion. More and more he lost interest in his classical studies. In the prolonged crisis of "storm and stress" through which he was passing, he spent the hours of study in writing interminable letters to his friends Baille and Cézanne, which generally required two or three postage stamps in order to be mailed. In these he expressed a great homesickness for Provence. He shed tears and railed at himself. He was bored with life at the Lycée; and always he was disgusted with himself. His "belly and his future" worried him. He would write of his readings, of his first efforts to write, of the superb plans for an epic poem which he was engaged upon. There would be moments of naîveté, of perfect childishness, and moments of illumination. And above all those passionate discussions of morals, of ideals from which no adolescents are exempt.

Reality is hideous, he observes; "let us veil it under the flowers. . . . let us eat, drink, satisfy our brute appetites,—but let the soul live apart, and our dreams embellish our leisure hours." He turns his regard "away from the manure-pile, to cast it upon the roses."

At the same time, he sees in George Sand's *Jacques* an admirable hero "who scorned society, her institutions, her prejudices." —"Read that book, or I shall be really angry at you," he cries

:o Baille, whose letters were beginning to reflect a sense for practical realities that pained Zola.

His counsels to Cézanne had the same burden. One must com-bat realism. "Men could not be healed by brutally displaying their own evils." And, "when one stirs up the scum some of it always remains and soils the hands!"

What would *he* write then? Lyrical poems, heroic epics.

In fact the whole tenor of Zola at nineteen may be neatly opposed to all the ideas which Zola of the middle period repre-ents. And one remarks clearly in passing that the outcries of his pponents too in those later years mimick curiously the lisping ccents of his callowest period . . .

And then a sad and revealing voice whispers to him: "Thou rt no more born for the sciences than for the imprisonment of a lerkship." And he realizes full well in his heart, "that the sciences re not his business; a heavy load that one shoulders with much ain . . ."

At last the interminable school year was over, and his mother n order to encourage him in his studies sent him back to Aix or a vacation with Baille and Cézanne, instead of letting him ander idly about Paris. For two months he lived with his friends, nd the old parties and excursions were revived. They bathed in e Arc, ascended the slope of the Sainte-Victoire, and returned the Infernet gorge and the *barrage*. There were the old hunts, at usually ended in shooting at stones which the others threw to the air. And the readings of Alfred de Musset by night. hen the long discussions, arguments, confidences. Zola had large reams to relate. Once in Provence, he urged his companions to me to Paris. There was nothing to be done in Aix.

After this delightful holiday, he returned in the early days October. But no sooner arrived in Paris, than he fell gravely ck. He was almost carried off by typhoid fever, and was forced undergo a slow convalescence.

For long weeks, for two months in fact, he lay in bed, his

mouth so ulcerated, his teeth so dislodged that he lost for a time the power of speech. He abandoned himself to great sullen dreams; he tasted the strangest and most luxurious sensations of fatigue and weakness, "a burning feeling in his feet," which he recalled all his life, a persistent vertigo in his head, a distant ringing in the ears.

Thus when he returned to the college for his last year, that of "rhetoric," he was months behind, and, in the mood of slow disaster which wrapped itself about him, the burden of catching up seemed incredible. His mother had in the meantime undertaken housework for others in order to keep the boy in school. He was aware of her misery; and though ashamed of himself, was unable to put himself seriously to work. Instead he played the truant, wandered into the parks, leaned dully over the parapet of the Pont Neuf and stared down at the clayey water of the Seine flowing by eternally as time flows by. . . .

The last year of schooling was thus even more depressing than before. There is the same note of regret for Provence, of rebellion against school drudgery; he is divided between revolt at "authority" and revolt at his own cowardice . . . There is always the same frowning timidity which prevents him from making friends. He is terribly lonely and terribly unsure of himself.

He feels an impulse to throw it all over at one moment and take some paltry position in an office. In their exalted conversations, he and his friends had always imagined some admirable rôle in society for themselves. The deadly routine of some shop or office was unthinkable and impossible. Yet this was what Zola thought now of embracing. "Happily," he remarks, "I have been held back at the edge of the abyss; my eyes have been opened, and I recoil with fear, perceiving the depths of the chasm and the rocks which await me below. 'Away with the petty office life! Away with that gutter existence!' I cried to myself. And then I looked about me and pleaded for counsel with great cries. Only an echo replied to me, that mocking echo which repeats your words, which

urls back your questions without answering them . . . And so took my head in my hands and began to reflect, to reflect eriously . . ."

Already he had written a story or rather a fairy-tale, *La Fée Amoureuse,* which treated in an excessively sentimental manner he theme of pure, chivalrous love. Down in Aix, his school friend Marguery had become the editor of a newspaper, *La Provence,* nd it was soon to be published there.

But what was a littérateur without a diploma in those days?

"Without a diploma," he wrote to Baille, "there is no safety; t is the open sesame to all the professions. There is no succeeding vithout wielding the diploma . . . If you shout from the house-ops that you are a littérateur, they will ask you for your bac-alaureate . . . If you are a fool, but carry this instrument with ou, then you are clever; if you are a man of talent and the Fac-ilty has not given you this certificate of intelligence, then you re a fool . . . To work, to work, then, my child. Let us begin gain: *rosa, la rose, rosae, de la rose,* etc. . . . To the assault or the precious talisman! Beware Virgil and Cicero! It is only ix months, a year of hard labor; then with a Homer in one hand nd a Titus Livius in the other, standing in the breach, surrounded y translations and theses, I may cry out gloriously, agitating my heepskin; 'I am a littérateur! I am a littérateur!' "

Then he turns from the mock-heroic tone to tell Baille that nce he has his diploma he intends to study law . . .

"It is a career which is in sympathy with my plans. I am ecided to become a lawyer. You may rest assured of course, hat the quill of the writer will peep out through the toga of the arrister.

"Ah, I say adieu for some time to my beautiful gilded dreams, ertain of harking back to them in happier hours.

Your studious friend, etc . . ."

He was a very foggy youth at nineteen. The interior turbulence

to the naked eye presented nothing but sluggishness and indifference. He seemed to be incapable at this time of perfect coördination, of a supreme effort toward something. His attention wandered, he day-dreamed of that freedom which Rousseau claimed was the highest good in life; a return to nature, which obviated the cold drudgery of Latin and Greek. Then in his anxiety to get somewhere he took the option of skipping his "philosophy" term and proceeding directly to the examination for his baccalaureate.

What happened was almost grotesque, illogical, unexpected; a little tragi-comedy. On the evening after he had taken the written examination, the candidate for baccalaureate went to bed without speaking to his mother, and firmly convinced that he had written a very bad theme and answered questions inexactly. What was his amazement, then, to find the next day that he had passed with fair honors. There was now only the "oral" test, a mere nothing. And when his turn came, he did well in the scientific part: algebra, mathematics, physics, chemistry. The last professor catechized him on history.

"When did Charlemagne die?"

Zola, visibly confused, missed this question by some six centuries, placing him in the reign of François I! Henceforth, there was a veritable rout, panic all along the line in German, literature, rhetoric. And when the inquisition was over, the professor of *belles lettres* over-ruled all the others by giving Emile Zola a zero in "literature."

This sad reverse did not prevent the youth from running off to Provence again for a vacation with his friends. A week later, in a blue blouse and in sabots he was roaming the hills and vales with Cézanne and Baille again, outside of Aix.

It was here and on this occasion that he wrote a first complete and most sorrowful poem: *Rodolpho.* It narrated, in a thousand or so rather pedestrian verses, the love of Rodolpho for Rosita and the cruel awakening therefrom. The accent of Musset here attains comic proportions involuntarily:

. . . nôtre Rodolpho, terrible enfant gâté
Amant de la folie et de la liberté . . .
Croyant à l'amour ainsi qu'à l'amitié . . .

Rodolpho was pure: at the very mention of the word "love" he could be seen to "turn pale and keep his silence," though the others mocked. But soon his dreams are shattered. His mistress betrays him, and he must needs kill her, his rival, and himself! It is all very sad and perhaps it is unfair to bring to light these first stammering verses of one who was by nature no apt versifier.

While in Aix the idea came to him of applying once more for his diploma at the Lycée of Marseilles, nearby. He prepared for several weeks, and appeared at the session of November. This time, although he had come second in the "written examinations" at the Sorbonne, where they were supposedly much more difficult, he did not even get to the oral examinations. He failed ingloriously. He returned to Paris to his perplexed and unhappy mother. In bureaucratic France, no decent position could be had without the official qualifications of the collegiate degrees. He faced the dreariest future!

He wrote to Baille:

". . . My intention is to enter as a clerk in the office of some organization; it is a desperate resolution, absurd! My future will be broken; I am destined to rot on the straw of an office chair, to become demoralized, to remain in the shade. I foresee vaguely these sad consequences, and I have that instinctive shudder which grips you when you are about to plunge into cold water. . . ."

CHAPTER IV

BOHEMIA

At twenty, his boyhood over, Emile Zola presented a repulsive exterior of lethargy and weakness. He seems to have borne the scholastic disasters at the Sorbonne and at Marseilles with indifference. He was thwarted in his efforts to enter a profession and secure profitable work. He had almost killed the hopes of his mother and his friends in him. And toward his mother who was reduced to doing housework in a *pension*, he acted almost with childish cruelty; he expected aid, he accepted the few francs she could give him from time to time, and he would fall into a panic at the thought of going to work.

Inside the husk of this sluggish adolescent, an absurd little soul was suffering deliciously the "malady of the century." This "soul-sickness" which surrounds the subject with a vague and grateful aura of romantic visions, compensating for his actual bafflement and repression, was a luxury which he could ill afford. And yet he wallowed in it, for two or three years more, to an extent which completely concealed the firm, the brutal, the decisive Zola later known to the world.

Under strange circumstances, during two years passed virtually on the pavements of Paris, the formative period began for him. His mind was fermenting slowly. Was it retarded? Yes and no.

But that is all meaningless; you have Mozart composing at four, but you have Flaubert unable to read at nine.

When he looks up tearfully from his interior mumblings, he is pathetically aware of his plight, and writes to his friend Baille: "During the past week, I have been overcome by a great melancholy . . . I believe it is the future that tortures me; I am twenty and have no profession. And if perchance I should have to earn my own living, I feel myself little able to do so. I have been dreaming up to now, and walking on shifting sands. Who knows when I shall fall? . . . You will succeed, I know: you go with your eyes fixed straight ahead of you, never swerving. I, with my lazy character—let us call a spade, a spade!—my reason loses itself in vain dreams, and when I awake, I shall find myself without a profession, without fortune, without talent . . . Courage, O Lord!"

How eternally comforting it is at this age to be a unique and independent spirit, to curse society like Musset's *Rolla*, and to prefer rather "to be broken than to become a party to its slavery; to laugh scornfully at what you call position, and what he terms only bondage!"

He wavered between such rebellion and submission to the needs of the body. "I am still a charge upon my mother," he writes in a conscience-stricken moment. "I must simply look for work in order to eat."

Or, in a more excessive vein, "I should join the army, become a soldier, if not for my mother . . ." It was a time when a "soul" was worth from 1,500 to 2,000 francs in the forces of Napoleon.

In the meantime, he stayed with his mother in a room at 241 rue St. Jacques, a grimy, tortuous old street, while friends of the family sought to find work for him.

M. Labot, the distinguished old gentleman who had known his father and had before helped him to enter the Lycée St. Louis now found him a job as a clerk in the Napoleon Docks.

The Docks were situated at the Canal St. Martin far over on the north side of Paris.

It was in the handling of customs charges and freight matters that he was employed. He would trudge the two miles or so every day to the rue de la Douane from the rue St. Jacques on the south side. His salary was 60 francs a month, and there was no hope of advancement. Even in 1860 there was no way of keeping body and soul together on such a pittance. The work was not arduous, but the hours were long and the somber and ill-smelling surroundings, together with the little compensation he received, wearied and depressed Emile Zola.

Lonely, despairing, "without friends, without women," he now began to carry on an enormous correspondence with his two most intimate friends, Baille and Cézanne, who had remained in Aix. He discussed the books he read, the beginnings of poems and stories he was writing, his literary admirations for André Chénier, for the novels of George Sand. Above all there was the note of doubt.

"I doubt all," he wrote at this time, "above all myself. There are days when I believe myself without intelligence, when I ask myself on what grounds I have based such proud dreams. I have not completed my studies, I do not even know how to speak good French; I am ignorant of everything."

Alas he would never become rich, he lamented. After all, riches did not concern him. All he longed for was tranquillity and a modest pension. If there was any joy left at all, it was that of having known these two dear friends. Surrounding them were only insignificant and prosaic beings, wicked and envious. He felt even "a certain glory" in having understood Cézanne and judged his worth.

In the provinces, Baille and Cézanne were quarreling, and he sought to conciliate them. Cézanne was all aflame to go to Paris and begin painting, whereas Baille was treading the path of duty.

And then, amusingly enough, Cézanne sent up from the prov-

inces that perennially imposing question: is it possible to get any work done in Paris?

"Tell me about your mistresses," he adds.

There are none!

"I hardly ever go out," Zola replies. "I live in Paris as if I were in the country. I occupy a secluded room and do not even hear the noise of carriages in the streets. If I could not perceive in the distance the arrow of the *Val-de-Grâce* I would think myself back in Aix. I see no one, and the evenings seem very long. I smoke my pipe a great deal, read a great deal and write little. Of course, one may work here, if there is the will . . ."

Then Zola added some financial information: how to live on approximately $25 a month. A room would cost 20 francs a month; lunch and dinner would be 2 francs a day, or 60 francs a month. The studio and miscellanies would cost 20 francs a month, which would leave only 25 more for laundry, candles, tobacco, etc.

"It is no fun at all at the Docks," he comments. "For a month I have been living in that hellish stable, and by Jove, I feel it in my back and legs and all my other limbs. I find my desk stinking. I am disgusted and I am going to throw over this foul warehouse pretty soon."

At the end of two months he quit the Docks.

1 1 1

And now Emile Zola drifting about in the Latin Quarter, found himself utterly destitute and virtually thrown upon the gutters of Paris. His mother who had been receiving small sums in settlement of the canal affair had nothing more to give him. He had moved to a small lodging at 35 rue Saint-Victor in April, 1860, his mother's quarters being too small; and he remained here facing need, shabbiness, hunger, in varying moods of stupefaction or regret. He had the capacity for withdrawing into his shell,

and ignoring the filth and desolation about him. It was one of the dark hours of his life. His situation at this time had all the standard qualities of the melodrama: Early Years of the Artist.

And yet it must not be painted too black. Although a pauper, he found himself surviving by those curiously oblique shifts which permit the more insouciant portion of Bohemia's population to persist. These two years were, to be sure, cold and hungry years; but their dark is offset by light: they have a broad chiaroscuro, running from despair to exaltation. They have all the excesses of adolescence.

He became light-hearted again as soon as he had abandoned his job. "Laziness is a fine thing," he commented. "You don't die of it any the sooner." He entered upon this kind of existence in the most carefree spirit, thinking only of perfecting his poetry and improving his mind.

His room was reached by climbing up a sheer winding staircase to the sixth floor, and then to the roof, where a light structure had been erected that was veritably a seventh floor. He spoke of furnishing it with his remaining resources in the *dernier chic*, with a divan, piano, hammock, a lot of pipes and Turkish houkas. But soon he was reduced to selling his pieces of furniture, one by one. Part of his clothes, anything which could be borrowed on, flowed regularly to the Mont-de-Piété, the somber municipal pawnshop for which Paris is notorious. Ill-nourished, cold, miserably clad, this poet of the seventh floor, thinking only of "human progress, of the rôle of regenerator of mankind," of dreams which "could bring about their own accomplishment," had perforce to develop a tough hide.

He borrowed money with reddening face, and an absurd mixture of arrogance and humility. Living in the Quarter, and announcing oneself "broke" and a poet (nearly all the livery that surrounds the profession) implies the acquiring of a rugged constitution, which can bear insult as well as hunger patiently. There is no care for tomorrow. Tomorrow there will be only three

sous to raise for another candle and two or three sous more for potatoes, bread, some Italian cheese. Poverty, which in his former life had been feared as a crisis, now became a familiar and habitual condition.

In the winter, since he never had fuel for his stove, he would lie late in bed, or go over to his mother's room to warm himself.

But now the lovely Parisian spring, with its blossoming of chestnut trees, set in, and the warm summer months lay ahead. In his odd and shabby garments he would go for long walks along the river bank, "reading all the length of the quais" at the bookstalls. He would elbow all the strange and "misunderstood" characters of the Quarter, in their fantastic costumes. Down the newly carved Boulevard St. Michel, which Haussmann had recently thrown open, he would plunge, brushing by men like Barbey d'Aurevilly, author of the *Contes Diaboliques*, with his luxurious black velvet cloak and hood, and Alphonse Daudet, another provincial awaiting fame, who attracted notice because of his handsome features and his affected dress. The friends and enemies, who were to people his later life, the crowds mirrored in his books, brushed him by.

The Latin Quarter, as we have said, was being rapidly transformed under the ponderous strokes of that evil genius, Baron Haussmann. Yet it retained its old character more than any other quarter, as Théodore de Banville noted in 1867. Even today, one traverses in the rue St. Jacques passages where the old walls seem to lean out crazily and shut off the sky. To the gardens, the open-air dancing palaces such as the "Closerie des Lilas" on the Boulevard St. Michel, it was still fashionable to repair for dancing after the opera. "On Tuesdays, the lovers of the dance would go tripping to the left bank, there to mingle with the youth of the schools and to content themselves with the modest repast of a roll and a dish of cream, afterward." These ladies, we are asked to believe, who proudly ate *bisque aux écrevisses* on other

days in the best cabarets of the Boulevards, came here "not with an eye for business.

"The eccentricity of the place arose from the desire of students to bear their destiny bravely and continue their studies while living on almost nothing. In order not to burden their families they accepted poverty with a pose of gayety and ardent folly, preferring to shock the Philistines by the fantasy of their garb and thus conceal their lack of money. They wore the *berets* of the Basques in order to save sixteen francs for a hat. And as for their female companions, if they could not make them sad and false *grandes dames*, they could at least give them their arms and promenade them in their mad little hats and painted flowers . . . How many times they have been sung, those sweethearts of the springtime and the twenties, whose whole wardrobe was not worth two louis. Sprung from the common people, they were doomed to work and feared not the needle; they loved their sweethearts without thinking of enriching themselves or marrying them, without other thought than to pass those years of youth which are so quickly flown. And once the dream ended, they returned bravely to their humble spheres, continuing to sew, and having only their charming memories to solace their bitter and laborious days . . ."

Even Harriet Beecher Stowe, visiting one of these gardens at this time, grew ecstatic over the "elegance of the dancers, the delicacy of their cavaliers, and the perfect distinction with which they did the quadrille." The tradition had lingered, even into the days of the garish Second Empire, when the Quarter was infested with chic "perpetual students," gambling hells, brewery girls, that here "it was all among friends," that life was gentler here.

Bohemia was crowded and busy. Having learned of its false importance through the works of Murger and others, it was taking itself in earnest. In the time of Zola's youth there was still the grimy absinthe den in the rue St. Jacques, under the patronage of littérateurs who never wrote, painters who never painted and

purious students of law and medicine. There were the hundreds f types like Des Roches, who in one short essay had burnt up all heir energy, and rested thereafter upon their glory. There were ll the men who, as Daudet wrote, "were thinkers. They say nothng, write nothing; they think. We admire them on trust; they are aid to be as deep as wells, and the fact is that one is disposed to elieve them so from seeing the number of *bocks* they swallow."

This simulated gayety, this camaraderie, which surrounded ola, the brooding and repressed youth of twenty, he may have esisted for a time. He may have scorned the painted faces, as a ountry boy; all the countenances may have seemed "to bear asks, and underneath, again masks." Yet it was inevitable that n the end he should be taken up and swept into the common hythms.

At heart he was not sad; he was one of those sensitive, inhibed natures who could be made extravagantly happy by small vents but feared to precipitate them, because he felt himself ncapable of playing a proper part. The busybody and worldly ise life of the Quarter ignores all such psychoses. The young scetic, the afraid-of-life, of women, the "misunderstood one," ould see on all hands how this life sought to understand him.

He made acquaintances among the Provençal colony, vagabond nd bohemian spirits who had escaped from Aix and Marseilles.

He relates to Cézanne the account of a *soirée* at his room in Iay. "We were twelve, my mother, Pagès (du Tarn), du Chaillan, ajot, myself; the others are not worth mentioning. The purpose this gathering was to read some poetry, and to hear some musians who were among us. It was quite artistic as you see. We rved three dozen biscuits, and two bottles, one of champagne, ne of Malaga. And then I read the first act of *La Nouvelle hèdre,* by Pagès (du Tarn). It was well-received. I wonder," adds coyly, "was it the author, or the host who was serving such ood Malaga, they were applauding?"

M. Pagès (du Tarn), as he insisted upon styling himself,

was "one of those thousands of misunderstood ones who tread the stones of Paris." More than twice Zola's age, he had "in his youth elbowed our audacious young lyricists, whom glory has since crowned." He exuded now an odour of sour grapes, and it was amusing to see how he scorned those *arrivistes*. "Victor Hugo and Musset were paltry authors who scarcely knew how to turn up with a good line here and there." He attributed their success to publicity, and connections. "Everything smiled upon them. Whereas for him, there were only obstacles, and despite his talent, nay his *genius,* he had not been able to emerge from the common herd."

"You see," he would say, "I wish to imitate nobody!" In order to mock at the romanticists he had called his *Nouvelle Phèdre* a classical tragedy, and had named it after Racine's play. "A miserable imitator, a pale gleaner," our young observer keenly termed him none the less; "gathering a few stalks in every field, and making of them a sheaf, ill made and ill bound."

For him it was a moment of intellectual exaltation. He was writing his first complete poems. It was the time of exciting literary admirations. To the charges of being "lazy," of lacking common sense, of ignoring the "realities" which Baille preferred, he would answer that he was a poet, that he had a great rôle to perform, that he was impelled by love of liberty above all, and that God had made him of the same clay as Musset's *Rolla.*

"You," he would retort, "you are strangling your soul! You are buried up to the neck in materialism, and under the pretext of seeking happiness, must bid adieu to dreams. . . . Ah, I know that the majority is on your side, and that I am laughable, mad. Go your own way! As for me I do not know what Heaven has in store for me, but I shall die content so long as I die free!"

And then he adds, "I am having my portrait made, nude, with just a little drapery, holding an antique lyre in my hands and my eyes lifted up toward heaven. . . ."

He wrote a long poem called *Paolo;* and since the year before,

he had written *Rodolpho* in a similar vein, he began working on a third poem, *L'Aérienne,* which would thus complete a trilogy. He wrote also an extremely tender story, in the mood of a Schubert waltz, *Le Carnet de Danse,* later included in the *Contes à Ninon,* his first volume.

All the products of this period are alarmingly bad. The lack of promise for some years to come is unusual. Still Zola felt that trembling awe of his own talents, that fluttering hope for artistic success which all young artists convulse themselves over at this disagreeable stage. In the cold nights, without heat, he would stay in bed, writing his poems and his letters, which were often pompous literary exercises. Once, he related, he was "reduced to holding a candle in one hand, and clutching the bed-covers and pencil and paper in the other," a situation that was far from comfortable.

For Cézanne he felt a deep friendship, and the relationship of these two men, at heart so different and antithetical, and of such contrasting fame, forms a striking episode which has never been clearly represented.

Zola had of course urged both his friends to join him repeatedly. They "would form a Pleiad of pale stars, but strong in their union!" Cézanne's father must have seen some of these appeals, for he pronounced Zola an evil influence over his son, of whom he was determined to make a banker.

After a three year struggle with his family Paul Cézanne came at length to Paris to study art, and rushed into his friend's arms weeping. There was no suspicion of the disappointment and coldness that would arise later between these two devoted comrades. There had been many differences of opinion, to be sure. Zola while admitting that he "could scarcely distinguish between black and white," insisted on counseling his friend. Cézanne was torn on the one hand between the impulse to follow the realism of Courbet, and on the other to investigate the whole question of

form and rediscover the art for himself. He was tormented by a thousand doubts and by such a mystical passion for perfection as Zola could scarcely understand. Zola would reproach him for tearing up his pictures in fits of rage, and he encouraged and solaced the stormy youth during his moments of despair.

"Paul is still the good-hearted, fantastic lad we knew at college. No sooner arrived here, than he talks of returning to Aix. With such a character, with such surprising and unexpected changes of front, I must remain silent and withhold my logic."

With increasing age Cézanne becomes even more stubborn and out-spoken. Nothing can bend him.

"To prove something to him," Zola writes to Baille, "is like trying to persuade the towers of the Nôtre Dame to do a quadrille. My plan is never to obstruct his fantasy. . . . To me he is always a good-hearted and dear friend, who understands and values me."

They lived together on the seventh floor of the rue St. Victor. In the summer evenings they would put a mat out on the terrace before their window and, drinking in the enspiriting panorama of Paris, lay their plans for her conquest and their future glory.

"In the poverty of my youth," Zola recalled long after, "I could view all of Paris from the attics of the quarters I lived in. Vast, motionless, indifferent, the city was always in the frame of my window like the silent witness, the confidant of my joys and sorrows. I had raved, and I had wept before her; I had loved and I had had my great joys. It was then from my twentieth year on that I dreamed of writing a novel of which Paris with its ocean of roofs would be a principal character, something like the chorus of antique Greek tragedies."

Cézanne, who had a slim annuity of 125 francs a month, was a good friend to Zola, as he was indeed to all the starving wretches in the Quarter. A legend still survives about his "wearing a red vest and always having a few francs in it to take a poor devil to dinner with him."

Zola would reprove him for his extravagance, and he would always reply:

"Well, what would you have me do? I get rid of my few francs every night, because I am afraid that if I should die before I woke up my father would inherit them."

Cézanne already breathed a hatred for the traditional schools. He was learning nothing at the studio he attended, and he schemed to finish something that would stand the bourgeois on their heads.

"What!" Zola would remonstrate, "you are painting pictures that are denuded of poetry! I have never been able to make anything out of this realism."

Cézanne would swear incoherently and become a "bear."

His crafty and curiously obstructive father had spoken in the same tone, when he saw his son's nudes.

"We can't have these things around the house any more," he snapped. "I don't want your grown-up sisters to see them."

"Why not?" Cézanne muttered. "Haven't they fat buttocks just like these women?"

He loved to defend his conceptions with strong-words, and sometimes a volley of oaths.

At the end of the summer, the two friends moved to separate quarters. There had been some embarrassment about Zola's being virtually supported by his friend. It was inevitable, too, that they should quarrel. Zola, who had vaunted the "glory of having understood and judged Cézanne at his worth," could no longer make anything out of his friend's rages and transports.

In an access of discouragement Cézanne would be about to pack up and leave for Aix. Zola would arrive and "make a great speech, exposing the folly of such a course. . . . In the meantime we went to a café. I sought a ruse in order to detain him, and finally I asked him to paint my portrait. He accepted this idea with joy, and there was no more question of return.

"But alas this cursed portrait was almost the cause of his quitting yesterday. After having begun twice, always dissatisfied with his work, Paul wanted to finish it and asked me for a last sitting. Yesterday when I went to see him, I found his trunk opened, his drawers half-emptied. Then he said to me calmly: 'I am leaving tomorrow.'—'And my portrait?' I asked.—'I have just smashed it to pieces. I wanted to retouch it this morning, and as it became worse and worse, I destroyed it. Now I am leaving.' I abstained from all comment. He became more reasonable, but it was only temporary. If he doesn't leave now, he will leave next week. *Paul may have the genius of a great painter, but he will never have the genius to become one.* The least obstacle throws him into despair. Let him leave. I repeat, let him leave if he wants to avoid a great deal of trouble."

Cézanne maintained many years later that Zola never forgave him for having destroyed this portrait.

Zola moved in the fall, again to a high perch, at 21, rue Neuve St. Etienne-du-Mont. It was a strange room, practically a belvedere or glass-enclosed cage on the roof of the house. Previously it had been occupied by Bernardin de St.-Pierre, the sentimental author of "Paul and Virginia." There was no fireplace here, and all the winds of heaven blew through the room. Inspired by his surroundings, Zola finished the long poem called *L'Aérienne,* which, added to the two other poems formed now a brief epic. "The Comedy of Love," he called it, thinking no doubt of Dante's "Divine Comedy." He found a certain relation between these poems, and in his own words, "a certain gradation which made them run the whole gamut of the passions, from the sensual and the brutal to the ideal and the angelic . . . The first represented love for its own sake, and without reason. The second, the struggle between the body and the soul, the angel seeking to defeat the demon without being able to succeed. The third represented the victory of the angel, the pure hymn of love detached from all that was earthly and losing itself in the breast of God!"

It was dull poetry, colorless and without any determined character. Zola himself soon had no illusions on this score.

"I know that I am unripe, that I am only stammering, that I am groping for my way," he said to Cézanne.

Yet he was mad with ambition. From his high attic window whence he could see the roofs of all Paris, he looked over this gray sea, with its chimneys like so many wind-tossed spars, and longed to conquer her. Nay to violate her!

"To be forever unknown," he exclaims to Baille, "is to end by doubting oneself. Nothing enlarges, nothing broadens the thoughts of an author so much as success . . . There are moments when all I have written seems childish and detestable, when all my projects of the future seem without merit. . . . How sweet it would be to feel the purple on my shoulders, not merely to drape myself with it, only to live more grandly under its rich and superb texture. . . ."

A last wave of Rousseauism was mounting to its crest. When he thought of love, of finding "*une amante*," he would wring his hands in despair. "In the city you see nothing but debauchery; in the country nothing but brutality . . . The curse of our time is polygamy. Everywhere sex; nowhere woman. Weep, oh my eyes, weep. I have felt the cold horror of which Job speaks, descending my spine; the earth is naught but a vale of tears; let them bury me and speak no more!"

✓ ✓ ✓

How roseate was the interior of this rapturous starveling. On the surface, he became shabbier and shabbier. His long black cloak turned a rusty green and gave way at the elbows and the shoulders. His poverty became abominable. He would borrow trifling sums from his friends; soon he could get no more . . .

Cézanne had gone back to the Midi, and Zola was grievously alone. Shy, timid with strangers, self-conscious, he felt himself

an object of scorn at times. This becomes even a melancholy obsession.

"I felt the crowd move apart from me, and point its finger at me. Derision! Sarcasms were hurled at me. I bowed my head for a time and wondered what crime I could have committed, I so young, and my soul so affectionate. . . . Then I lifted my brow, and a great pride came to my heart. I felt myself great beside these dwarfs. I addressed myself to the Muse, and thought that if Heaven should preserve a name for me, I would feel delight in hurling this name back at their faces, like a supreme retort to their stupid scorn."

Once in an outburst of "spleen" he relates bitterly the incident of a well dressed, bourgeoise young girl who shouldered him out of her way into the gutter, with a look of disgust!

"*I am a pariah!*" he groaned to himself.

He became irreligious, and shocked people with his atheism. He became a "bear," one of the many of the Latin Quarter. He spent his time chasing the elusive five-franc piece; everything of the slightest value had gone to the Mont-de-Piété. He dined off a pennyworth of bread, a pennyworth of Italian cheese or potatoes. Above all there must be the three-penny candle which meant "a whole night of literature." He knew hunger intimately and from long acquaintance; he was familiar with the various gripings of the bowels. At heart he became one of the rebels, the haters of authority. It is at this period that a certain bitter expression of the mouth, an air of disappointment began to line his face deeply.

Poverty. Hunger. Squalor. Under the daily scourge of these things, the flood of romanticism was waning.

* * *

In the provinces there had been a murmur among some of his friends, Marguery in particular, in favor of realism. This youth, (who shortly afterward committed suicide) had become an editor

f *La Provence* published in Aix, and was launching a first novel, Romance and Reality." He headed a group of young skeptics, ho had fallen completely under the sway of Champfleury and his chool, the obscure precursors of "realism." They were the first nemies of romanticism. But their books were not only truthful; ney were dull. Their sole glory now rests in their influence on laubert. Zola at this time wrote mockingly of them, and remarked that the inhabitants of Aix, "had better beware lest *La rovence* be seen by their women."

Interspersed among the romantic flights in Zola's letters there re already little prurient bits.

"The description of your model amused me very much," he rote to Cézanne. "Chaillan claims that they are very palatable ere, without being of an early freshness. They are sketched in e daytime and caressed at night—the word *caress* is rather ild. They are said to be very accommodating, especially at ight. As to the fig-leaf it is virtually unknown, and the love of rt veils that which would be too excitating in their nudity . . ."

Zola was not a very attractive figure, in his shabby clothes, in, bespectacled, and bearing always his hungry and disappointed expression. He was goaded by the fear of being ridiculed, nd his inexperience and sentimentalism about love were unerngly calculated to make him a laughing stock among the "girls" f the Quarter.

"If you love them, they mock you; if you mock at them, they ve you," he explained to his friends in the provinces.

Again, dire poverty narrowed his opportunities to the most nfortunate and reduced specimens, whose hard physiognomies carcely chimed with his roseate illusions.

"*I have suckled at the breast of illusion,*" Cézanne had written recently in a characteristic outburst. The phrase gripped Zola's nagination. An undertone of curiosity and irritated continence ppears. Among Frenchmen of his time, the chastity of his youth as later a subject of scandal!

In his correspondence with Baille and Cézanne, he derives now almost a vicarious joy out of the narration of their little escapades. There would be requests for "details, facts."

"I would love to have you tell me all about Julienne and Baptistine. I would like to know all about the little follies of dear Edgar and the gestures or expressions the girl made. 'I must fix my stocking!' Oh, naïveté! what crimes are committed in thy name! . . . I have already told you that this affair repells me; *but let us not make ourselves appear more saintly than we really are, and for my part, I confess a great curiosity.*"

And prodded by the willingness he saw about him, and by what is in the poet virtually a scientific "thirst for experience," he would entertain the "mad notion of taking up some unfortunate girl from the gutter, and giving her his love." Perceiving a good heart, a last glow of love, he "would attempt to lave all that is soiled in her with love. . . . But alas these fair formulae are so deceiving. The trace of debauchery persists, even though the heart is not corrupted; the good is effaced by evil . . . No, I do not despair of finding a mistress; I do not deny love, I merely await some good angel, some rare exception to the rules I have laid down, although I am perfectly aware that I am day-dreaming, and that my desire will never be realized."

Having been ejected from his airy belvedere in the spring of 1861, the young man found himself living in a perfect *bouge*, or den.

The *hotel garni* or furnished rooming house, is the last resort of questionable students, of grisettes, the *Mimis* of real life. The walls were terribly thin partitions. At night there would be "sounds of revelry," bottles being opened or smashed; caresses, sighs of delight, kisses, would be wafted through the thin walls. Sometimes a hysterical, sick wench would rave in illness like a wild thing. One night at the hotel in the rue Soufflot, bedlam itself broke loose; a terrified clamor of female voices rose up to the night sky. Shaken out of sleep by this uproar Zola timidly crept

out into the hall. It was a *descente* or raid by the police to round up girls who had no "cards." The unfortunates were herded off to the prison of St. Lazare to be identified professionally and to remain under official supervision and scrutiny thereafter.

In this environment our idealist could scarcely hope to remain "pure" for long, and it is out of this period that a first stammering novel of "experience," "The Confessions of Claude," which is admittedly autobiographical, has come.

The room of the poet is described as a "garret-room at the top of a dank stairway. It is large and irregular; the angles lose themselves in the shadows and the bare and slanting walls make the room a sort of corridor that stretches out like a coffin. The wretched chairs and furniture, the thin and warped floor and walls, all creak and groan at the touch. Strips of discolored damask hang over the bed, and the curtainless windows open on a great black wall, eternally erect and severe." It is all furnished in the cheap luxury which is habitual with such resorts.

Into this bleak cell, love, romance, woman, what you will, staggered from the gutter one night, collapsing either from drunkenness or starvation, or both, into the meager arms of the romantic poet.

And thus he who had preached the "love of the soul" took up life for some months with a "creature," one of those "impure women." Instead of the sylph-like "Ninon" of Provence, he finds in his arms now a "Laurence," in a room which was the den of starved luxury. She was one of those "old women of twenty," having nothing more of the woman left than the fated mark of her sex! *

"Alas it is done! I am the fiancé of vice! I have betrayed my youth."

Zola had found a companion for his misery. One such as sprang from this misery itself. He has the vertigo of Werther-like sorrow.

* *Confessions de Claude,* 1865.

"Provence, the broad sunlit country-side, the tears, the laughter, the hopes, the dreams, the innocence and pride of the past have all departed; only Paris, with its mire, a garret, and its misery remained . . . All that is real now, is Laurence, degradation, my affection for this woman."

For some time, some months, he continued to live with this girl. It was something that he could hardly have avoided in this sordid zone. That he should have been capable of feeling an affection for her is believable, since it was all *prepared for,* and almost planned like a "literary experience" in his letters.

In the meantime, his resources are exhausted slowly and surely. He can count the day when there is to be absolutely nothing.

"How they lie," he cries out, "those who pretend that poverty is the mother of genius! Let them but count those whom despair has extinguished or debauched."

In a letter of February 5, 1861, to Cézanne, there is a sudden gap, the sharp break from the idealistic vein.

"I have been through a rude school, that of real love-making; to such an extent that I cannot dwell on the subject, so much does it depress me. I shall have a good deal to tell you when you return. Such things cannot be mentioned in letters; *the incidents themselves are nothing, it is the details alone that are important.* I even doubt whether I shall be able to tell you in so many words all the painful or droll sensations that I have experienced. The result is that at any rate I have now *experienced,* and knowing the way will be able to guide my friends. Another result is that I possess new views on love, and they will be of great aid to me in the work that I plan to write next."

How well he bespeaks the typical man of letters, watching himself in a mental mirror during the transports of his love experience. If the emotions of the prostitute are jaded and artificial, neither are those of the littérateur more genuine. "New views on love . . . of great aid . . . in my next work . . ." There is an illusion that poets make great lovers. Of all the lovers they are the

most detestable, the most calculating, the least virile, giving least, and drawing dividends on what they give in their romances and poems!

Zola was now observing life at first hand. Perhaps that is not the best way of observing life, that of being too much immersed in it? It was one of the few times that he was to do so. His own experiences made him very uncomfortable. He was much happier hearing the accounts of his friends' exploits, and far more expert in using them.

His situation became quite horrible now. He was alone in the world, repulsed and wretched, not daring to beg and poorer than those who extend the hand for alms . . . There is an intoxication in such misery, as he relates. The mind and body become drugged and somnolent; scarcely capable of feeling the degree of nakedness and degradation.

He would make desultory sorties to look for jobs. At offices, he would be treated quite rudely and would perceive that it was because he had made the mistake of being shabbily dressed. He would be told that he wrote in a bad hand, that he had no suitable experience, that he was "good at nothing." He would take them at their word and depart, ashamed for the moment of having "thought of stealing the money of these honest people by placing *my intelligence and will* at their service."

As the winter of 1861-2 approached, his hunger was so great that he would set traps on the roof for sparrows, as Guy de Maupassant related, and broil them on the end of a curtain rod. He learned how to subsist on bread dipped in olive oil, the oil of Provence which friends from Aix sent him.

One day having run all over the Quarter and failed to borrow the few sous necessary for their frugal supper, he took off his jacket and throwing it to his girl said:

"Here, go and take this to the pawn-shop."

And he remained perforce in his shirt on days of freezing cold. Reduced to further extremities, he was forced to sell his

last pair of trousers, in order to keep body and soul together, and "play at the Arab" as his mistress styled it, winding his bed-sheets about him as his sole covering during his waking hours.

It is not to be wondered at that his retaining of a "Laurence" made it difficult for him to borrow anything. As in the case of "Claude," it is conceivable that the curious morals of the Latin Quarter would regard such a woman as a possible source of income to a starveling, and her man therefore "suspect"!

In the midst of this stark misery, his girl would prepare odd costumes for them out of the blankets and tapestry, or motley colored rags; and in this regalia they would sortie out to the Closerie des Lilas, among all the harlots, with their paint, their coarse voices, their abandoned and brazen gestures. Looking on and taking part in this parade of vulgarity, Zola suffered severe compunctions. He had not yet lost his romantic conscience. The mode of life and the manners of his comrades, he maintained, bewildered or revolted him. In the general holocaust of his illusions he was now left with no religion, no philosophy, no certainties, and above all he longed for certainties. It is conceivable that this mistress whom he had taken up out of the streets, and whom despite his ardor and lyricism he sheltered so poorly may have found fidelity irksome and costly . . . In his despair and confusion he may have cried out often like his "Claude" that there is no more ideal love, and that "the poets and bohemians who sing of their *Mimis* and *Musettes* all lie! Their loves are merely gutter affairs over which they cast a cloud of rice-powder."

His soul was in the state of a home that is packing up to move elsewhere. Everything is in disorder, all the drawers are open, the soiled linen scattered everywhere and there is as yet neither arrival nor departure.

He had whole days of dreamy stupor in which he played the "bear" and sulked. He read voraciously, although without direction. Yet there was a terrible energy which lay dormant in him or knew not how to apply itself.

"I should like to change my way of life," he claimed to Cézanne, "and shake myself up a bit, in order to throw off the dust of laziness which covers me. I have been meditating for a long while, and it is time to produce. A whole volume, episode by episode, chapter by chapter, is forming itself in my head. I have firmly resolved to get to work and finish it by next summer."

His whole pleasure now was in "smoking his pipe and dreaming. I pass whole days thus, without being bored, never writing, and reading sometimes a few pages of Montaigne."

His dreams are especially worth noting here, for they were nearly all realized. That *they could be realized* is their peculiar quality.

"One sad result of the life I lead, is that I have become frightfully gluttonish. I long for drink and food, and I take the same pleasure in devouring a toothsome morsel as in possessing a woman."

He conceives a hatred for serious and respectable people, all "grave philosophers who preach publicly and sin in secret." To unmask them!

He longed for heat.

"I should work hard," he claims, "if only my stove were lit."

He dreamed of doing things on a huge scale, "*faire le grand*," after the fashion of Hugo whose stupendous novel *Les Misérables* had just appeared and been read by millions. He speaks of writing a long poem "which would set the crowd howling or applauding at his feet." And indeed he set to work on another trilogy, one which would mirror the sum of the ideas of his whole time in one sustained and splendid vision. It would comprise "three scientific or philosophical poems. . . . The first concerning the birth of the world (according to the nebular hypothesis!); the second a complete picture of humanity (according to Darwin), a sort of synthesis of universal history from the beginnings to the flowering of modern civilization. . . ." And finally he would sing of Man lifting himself higher and higher in the scale of nature;

The Man of the Future. The title of this cosmic poem he perfected in advance with little difficulty: *Genesis!*

He composed in all eight lines of it.

He felt in himself, nevertheless, "a force," and he had already growled between his teeth, that if Heaven should ever grant him a great name, he would find voluptuous delight in hurling this name into the face of his tormentors. Pity the world, if he should ever attain power and glory!

Often he saw himself in the rôle of lashing the public to rage and hatred of him by his bold outbursts. And then to live surrounded by a few faithful friends—he even entertained dim visions of himself as the head of a "school"—"and with my dog who loves me a little, my mistress who loves me not, and the crowd, the selfish, indifferent crowd, which speaks to me, surrounds, beckons, without even disturbing the tranquillity of my desert."

Above all, he longed for a "situation," for regular work, by which he could gain his bread in the day time, and occupy himself with his dreams at night. Such a regular life seemed an elysian dream, for he had no qualifications, his training as a philosopher, a poet, and a bohemian, made him of little use in a business office. Efforts to place him had met with many obstacles.

Oh! to be rid of material anxieties, he sighed; to have two or three friends, to be rich so as to mock at riches; to do a task of inspiration rather than one imposed upon him. "But ah! this will never come to pass! I know too well."

As for his waking life, black misery had now reached its *comble*. He knew all the varied torments of hunger. He had become so sedentary and feeble, he who had scrambled all over the hills and plains of Aix for whole days—that the least exercise, the shortest walk made him faint with fatigue.

It is not conceivable that the young poet of *Genesis*, about to be ejected from the sordid *garni* of the rue Soufflot, could have sunk much lower in the scale of society. He had offered the nobil-

ity of his interior life to the indifference of the world for two years. As long as there had been a rag to cover this interior, a crumb to sustain it, he could speak of the "sacredness of liberty," of the dignity of poetry, an art which was of the "most absolute necessity for mankind." But the final strokes of penury, hunger, sheer nakedness, silenced him. It was a question of being rescued or sinking completely out of sight.

He was rescued through the intercession of a friend of the family, and once placed in a tenable position with regular work and food assured him, he was clamorous with gratitude.

"Saved from Bohemia!" he exclaimed.

He clutched at his foothold of safety with hysterical fingers. From now on he would never let go.

CHAPTER V

THE CLERK AT HACHETTE AND COMPANY

A VENERABLE old man who had been a friend of Zola's father, a Dr. Boudet, member of the Academy of Medicine, had responded to the young man's pleas for aid by recommending him to the publishing house of Hachette and Company. Since there was to be no opening for a month, the kind doctor gave Zola the small commission of delivering New Year's cards to all his friends, for this service slipping a louis into his hand. It was simply a tactful way of aiding the youth to clothe himself in more decent fashion; for alas, the good doctor was one of the few in whom the out-at-elbows and green-black habit of the poet had aroused something other than tittering mirth.

Thus, his back covered again, his breast furnished with hope of bodily nourishment, a gold-piece bouncing in his pocket, Zola galloped around Paris depositing New Year's greetings for Dr. Boudet at a score of residences, many of them the homes of erstwhile class-mates at the Lycée St. Louis.

Foreseeing relief, his habitual gloom subsided a little.

"Things are not so black," he wrote to Baille, "and I laugh perhaps more often than you would think."

At the beginning of February in 1862, he woke up early in the morning to report to Hachette's and was placed as a clerk

in the packing department. For months he wrapped up books and parcels; but there was not a murmur, not a word from him. The hundred francs a month he was earning, (a bare $5 a week), was just enough to support one then in decent poverty. It was all that he had asked for in his days of black misery. For months, then, he was the "good boy" of the office, patient, submissive, orderly. He had had a severe lesson whipped into him, and now that he had something he would cling to it tenaciously with a methodical persistence that was to become a dominant trait. Ah! he was saved at last; he was through with Bohemia. He had his foothold in this baffling and cruel world, and his exhausted body absorbed without reflection the wine and the good bread he could now buy.

Soon his sincerity was rewarded by promotion to the advertising department and a small advance. He could eat modestly now at the *crêmeries*, or dairies; lunch for fourteen sous, dinner for eighteen. He breathed more easily, and could sit at his desk looking around him, and observe at his leisure this bright new existence of order, of confinement, of regular alimentation and clean linen.

There was a short and mild struggle with the old waywardness in him, when in the summer, the sun shone gayly through the window, and he found himself chained to his desk and his routine. The effortless leisure of Bohemia made its last tempting appeal of luxury and inward contentment to the truant in him that loved to "go to school in the bushes." Perish such thoughts! In Zola a neat, painstaking clerk was taking form. For the vice of waywardness, of *oisiveté*, substitute that of *gourmandise*. In the starved young poet of the ill-famed hotel in the rue Soufflot, a connoisseur of food was budding. This talent, or vice if you wish, was soon cultivated to such a degree as to become notorious. He ate slowly, and smoked his pipe afterward in delicious physical comfort. He was making up for years of "bread dipped in oil." His organs developed latent powers of appreciation for varied, extended and consistent eating. Later he was to drop exhausted from banquets

of fourteen or fifteen courses, and six or seven wines. Having tasted something of these unknown pleasures, all his organs must have been griped with torment at the thought of returning to leanness!

"Faith has returned," he wrote to both his friends. "I believe and hope . . . The good days have set in; I laugh a good deal." The wounds of the past were healing, "a past which did much to throw me into despair; *it almost annihilated the future.* Now I am completely beyond all that."

Emile Zola began to fill out a little.

He looked about him at first diffidently, then with a franker and more direct regard. He became even a little cocky.

His work in the advertising department brought him into casual contact with editors, novelists, historians. He looked them over critically, and with precocious disapproval observed:

"They are all tradespeople!"

Then he commented further:

"How many of them could be safely buried!"

The zone of literary glory which had seemed so ephemeral, or at least so distant, since even the intermediary steps were invisible, he now regarded at close hand. He appraised these personages of letters and journalism; he listened for their scraps of conversation, watched their gestures. His ambitions reawoke; but now they were equipped with a knowledge of the means and the machinery.

He learned how literature is "cooked up," how success is fabricated. He knew the thousand little *canailleries* used to open doors, "how little talent is necessary in order to arrive . . . the art of using the fame of others, the cruelty with which they climb over the bodies of dear colleagues . . . the whole breathless and uneasy life."

Since it was his business to maintain touch with the press for Hachette, and to arrange for publicity, he became aware of the

now immense power of the newspaper, and learned to turn this knowledge completely to his own advantage.

He deliberated over short-cuts to glory. After all the Muse has done little for me, he soliloquized . . . If it is not in me to be a great poet, then *morbleu,* I shall become a prosateur!

"Bah! If you come to Paris from the provinces," he observed, "with a poem and a novel in your trunk, the poem is refused everywhere and the novel welcomed at once."

And so the idol, Alfred de Musset, the sighing, sobbing, singing Musset of the "Nights" was overthrown; and into his place trotted the keen, portly and worldly-wise figure of Honoré de Balzac. The author of that vast cycle of "scenes from Parisian and provincial life," who had died about ten years before, was now deemed "dull" and "coarse" by the lyrical Olympians of the time and was little read. It was a discovery for Zola to open his pages and meet for the first time the measured and leisurely pace of his prose, the detached interest in all the gamut of human conduct.

The advance of science and the ideas particularly of the English materialists were having their effect in France. Darwin's theory of selection and evolution, and Laplace's nebular hypothesis, with their deep appeal to the reason, made great detonations, and established immense, and what appear to us, extravagant hopes in the power of experimental science to measure all of life.

Hippolyte Taine, probably the most distinguished thinker in France at this time, represented the new scientific cult in France, and sought in turn to bring history, ethnology, art, literature, under the more rational scrutiny of the experimental method.

A phrase of his: "It is not my intention to comment or moralize . . . only to investigate, to *expose,* to lay all before you . . ." went echoing through Zola's mind and continued so echoing to the end.

It was a moment when Zola had written to Paul Cézanne, "I shall be able to paint certain details of life much better, it seems

to me, than a year ago." And the idea may have come simultaneously of doing so without *moralizing* and without *commenting* on them. "I see, I hear better. New senses which were lacking in me have come." And, "I believe that there is a great source of poetry in the study of Nature, *as she is*." He was in perfect fettle to be seduced by the shameless and unblinking Balzac.

He moved to new quarters—he had almost a neurotic mania for changing his domicile—in the Impasse Saint-Dominique, choosing perhaps under the influence of Balzac, a large and gloomy room in what had formerly been a convent. It had long, vaulted corridors, and the dense silence it preserved from its former character was in severe contrast to the wild uproars and broils of the *garni* he had just escaped from.

Here he began the persistent, methodical battle with himself and with the field of letters. Powerful habits not only of regularity but of concentration were erected.

It was not easy. As he recalled to Edmond de Goncourt, some years later, a rush, a flood of ideas would come to him at once, and in his impotence to control his emotions, he would be left baffled, palpitating, inarticulate. Once he found himself on the track of something, he could discipline his mind. He found that it was not worth while to fly into Rousseau-esque transports; inspiration was for sale everywhere.

Writing was actually painful to him; it was a bitter struggle. After ten hours of work at Hachette's, he would eat and then shut himself up in his room from eight-thirty on. He acquired the secret of steadiness and application manifested later in that "daily 1,000 words," which, like the eternal drop of water wearing away stone, rears a monumental work. He began to draw on astounding sources of energy, which we admire without love. The old charge of laziness now appears incredible.

He set to work on a novel. Like nearly all novels written at

twenty-three it was based on his own experiences of life and love. He wrote a hundred pages of it and then laid it aside.

He continued in the meantime writing stories, such as the one he had contributed to *La Provence* the year before. He had three stories written, and he hoped to write a dozen and make up a book. His plan was to have the manuscripts pile up and then begin sending them around. As usual, they were taken in the provinces. *Simplice* was published by Marguery in Aix; *Le Sang* was published in the *Revue du Mois*, of Lille; and *Celle qui m'aime*, the best of the early stories and the one which gave suspicion of actual talent, was sent to the *Figaro* and "was declined with thanks."

Things were beginning to move a bit. In the winter of 1863, when Emile Zola moved to a larger room at 7 rue des Feuillantines, he and his mother began to "receive" on Tuesdays. His friend Louis Baille was in Paris studying at the Ecole Polytechnique. Marius Roux, known far back in the days of M. Isoard's pension for children, would come too with his trousers "so impeccably pressed that you could never tell the crease of the knee." Poor Paul Cézanne whose youth was almost destroyed by the intensity of his genius—what of the storms going on perpetually in his brain—had just returned from the Midi after trying in vain to become a good bank-clerk. And Antony Valabrègue, a young poet, arrived now from Aix, fresh and hopeful. Liqueurs and tea would be served. Their discussions were conducted with the ardor, the passionate vehemence with which the French characteristically take their art and their literature.

Paul Cézanne has left us a lovely sketch of his friend at this time, which was drawn from memory and which Emile Zola knew nothing about. The eyes are luminous and dark in a face of unusual pallor. The forehead is square and quite ascetic; the whole round head tapers down to the small, firm, cloven chin, covered by a youthful beard. The lower lip, in contrast with the character of the eyes and forehead is a little thick. The small nose, a little

pugnacious, with its sensitive nostrils, is very revealing. It was characteristically tilted outward when Zola spoke with excitement, like that of a pointer dog.

With Baille and Cézanne in Paris again, the "three inseparables" were reunited. Baille was rapidly becoming bourgeois; he was more self-contained, more shrewdly ambitious than the other two. Formerly the dominant one of the three, his adolescent passion for literature and for verse-making was now visibly waning. What becomes of all those talented youths who plunge back into obscurity as the "friends of great men" and the extinction of whose promise seems inexplicable? His talents were already submitting to the discipline of practical opportunities. Was he not bent already on a "proper marriage?" Were his eyes not fixed on the dignified and mediocre position in society to which he was to climb?

There were long walks in the evening in the Luxembourg Gardens, or in the great square of the *Invalides* whose gloomy pile dominated the river bank. Together they dreamed in their divers ways of conquering Paris. Or there would be passionate disputes with Cézanne who, most fortunate of all in that he possessed an income, was nevertheless the most importunate, the most tormented, the most tremulous of the three. His youth was a confused strife with himself, a swift yielding to impulse or despair, which in no way suggested the great austerity and the complete mastery of self that was to come in the ripened man.

In such a stage of transition there is a curious ineptitude in the actions undertaken. Our author in his solitary evenings was still writing fairy-tales and stories filled with a roseate fantasy. He made even a last attempt to set himself forth as a poet.

He had long gazed at M. Louis Hachette meaningfully; the dean of French publishers might through some magic wand be-

come a patron saint? Gathering together his three long poems, one morning in the autumn of 1863, he waited until M. Hachette had left his office and then furtively deposited the manuscript of "The Comedy of Love" upon his desk.

He waited for days, anxiously scanning the impassive face of his chief. At last during one lunch hour when the others were gone M. Hachette called him and read him a little sermon. He had really been quite angry at the liberties his clerk had taken. And those who know the momentousness of squeezing through French doors, penetrating into financial or political citadels, may understand the annoyance of M. Hachette at such irregularity.

He had, to be sure, relented; and since he perceived that the young clerk was also a small man-of-letters, encouraged him by advancing him to a better post in the advertising department. As for the poems, they would not set the world afire. It would be better, M. Hachette advised, for Zola to devote himself to prose. In his new position the clerk received, first 150 francs, then not long after 200 francs a month, as well as some commissions for outside work.

The youth was on the whole overjoyed at the result of this approach, and was still more excited when M. Hachette ordered a story for a children's magazine which the house published. He set to work in his new quarters, for he had moved still again, out to Montrouge, the edge of the city where he had a full and unobstructed view of the cemetery of Montparnasse. Here he wrote *Soeur des Pauvres*, the story of a very poor little girl who was so kind to all the other poor people that a good fairy gave her a magic penny which had the power to reproduce itself eternally.

When M. Hachette read this he gave Zola a sharp look and said: "Sir, I see that you are revolutionary!"

The story was refused. Strange. It was scarcely inflammatory stuff, as yet; it is merely possible that the vivid picture of destitution in it was unorthodox during the superficially prosperous

régime of Napoleon III. There were also some mild reproaches for the rich. Otherwise it was a rambling and badly constructed tale.

Undaunted by this check, Zola sought fame in another direction by sending his poems to the prize contest known as the *Jeux Floraux de Toulouse*, in the south of France, in which Hugo as a boy had first won renown. He got no mention at all; and he felt disgusted with himself for having sought the approval of a faction whom he had already rejected completely in his own conscience.

"What was I doing in that fool's gallery?" he writes to Antony Valabrègue. "I can no longer rail at the Academy. *There really must be a little infantilism in my character.* It is unworthy of a man like me, having suppressed his own opinions, to sacrifice himself for a little *gloriole.* Yet that is what I have done, and I find myself punished by my own remorse."

He complains of the tedious work he is doing, and the little daily annoyances he is subjected to. "It would be the best part of wisdom to preserve a supreme indifference to all the trivial details of my daily life, and to live in my thoughts wherever I list, sometimes far off in Provence, sometimes floating over the open seas . . ." He is working on small commissions for provincial newspapers, covering a series of lectures being given now under the auspices of the Emperor at the rue de la Paix, on Shakespeare, Aristophanes, Chopin, La Bruyère, etc. He has done nothing as yet with his volume of stories, and thinks of resuming work on the "novel" begun two years before. "The important thing at any rate," he concludes, "is to have many things in my drawer; there will be time enough to convey them to the public."

By the summer he had his book ready, and called it *Contes à Ninon* ("Stories for Ninon"). He had been working busily over this, recopying and polishing the stories. The habits of regular labor had become powerful. On Sunday mornings he would close the persiennes, light his lamp and set to work, so accustomed was he to writing at night.

He decided to bring his manuscript to Hetzel and Lacroix, the booksellers who had founded the Librairie Internationale at the corner of the rue de Grammont and the Boulevard des Italiens. It was a center of revolutionary ideas, publishing translations of important foreign works such as those of Grote, Herder, Buckle, as well as native authors like Hugo, Edgar Quinet, Lamartine, Jules Simon, Proudhon and Fourier, some of them heroes of the red days of '48, the impassioned Utopians and the forerunners of modern socialism.

Emile Zola would pass by often, gaping at the noted men of the Left, for whose views he felt his sympathy quickening. Mindful of M. Hachette's comment, he went directly to the home of liberal thought with his book.

M. Lacroix, long afterward, with only a monocle and one trunk left out of the wreckage of a half-century of literary commerce with the giants, bravos, mountebanks and coquettes of the time, gave a charming account of his contact with Zola.

"In every man of letters," so he would moralize, "there lies hidden the *soubrette*. All of them are animated by an equal impatience and show marvelous address and subtlety when their name or reputation is at stake. Lamartine, Hugo, Balzac, Dumas, Michelet, and Zola, were all incomparable showmen in this sense . . ."

In the early spring of 1864, he saw a stocky lad, timid and ungraceful, enter his shop and take out of his pocket a package which was carefully bound in colored favors and blue ribbons.

"I am employed at Hachette's," said the young man. "I devote my spare time to literary work. Here are some stories that I would like to have you publish. Will you promise to read them?"

Lacroix pledged that he would read the manuscript.

But Zola continued, with some embarrassment: "I am not concealing from you the fact that I have shown this to several of your confrères. They returned the manuscript without even

opening it. And so, I am a little discouraged, a little tired of it all. May I hope for a better fate?"

"Come back in a week."

This was the usual formula for importunate young authors.

Zola left. M. Lacroix, burdened with cares, forgot completely about him, having put the manuscript aside.

The matter dragged a long time. But every morning for some time he would meet at the door of his shop, the timid young man who regarded him with an imploring look, which he sought to avoid.

One day Zola blocked his passage, and said, "I beg you, read my *Contes à Ninon*. Read only one, any one. I assure you that I have talent!"

There was in his tone, and in the expression of his face, a conviction so moving that M. Lacroix was touched, and read the manuscript. He felt its youth, its excesses, its conventional lyricism, but he could not put out of mind, as he declares, the extremely earnest, the intense regard of this absurd young man. At length he decided to gamble on him.

He sent Zola a note: "Come and see me in my office, to-morrow morning."

Emile Zola spent a whole day in dizzy suspense, unable to eat or concentrate on his work. In the night he was tortured by insomnia. The next morning he escaped from his office and went to M. Lacroix, who said to him simply: "We have accepted your book for publication. Meet M. Hetzel who will draw up a contract with you."

Zola rushed home, to throw himself into the arms of his mother. He was only twenty-four and he unburdened himself in the evening in one of his long letters to a friend in the provinces.

"The battle has been short," he writes, "and I am surprised that I have not suffered more. I am now on the threshold of things. There is a broad stretch of plain to traverse, and I may yet

break my neck doing it. But since it only remains for me to go onward, I shall march on!"

Three months later, October, 1864, Emile Zola's first book was issued by Hetzel and Lacroix. He went at the business of advancing his cause with unabashed enthusiasm. Through his connection with Hachette's he found ways of getting the book noticed in a hundred newspapers. He wrote swift, exultant, egotistic notes to his friends, pleading with them for articles on the book. It is touching to note how, in writing to Marius Roux, associated with the *Memorial* of Aix, Zola begged him in his review to mention also his friend Baille, and "especially Cézanne, since it would give pleasure to their families."

The book was kindly received by the critical press. Everybody said it was a nice book. And then nothing more was said about it.

The *Contes à Ninon*, containing some stories that had been written during his earliest youth, others in his student days in Paris and the rest in the Latin Quarter or while working at Hachette's, was completely in the romantic vein. There is little to be said for it; it is one of the least promising of first works. It gives little indication of the later style. All that we may conclude from it is that in his unguarded moments, in his early and most impressionable youth, Zola was a child of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Even prior to the publication of the *Contes à Ninon*, Zola had forsaken the book, inwardly ashamed of its sentimentality and its dishevelled outcries. Its publication was a *pure piece of opportunism;* at its worst a gesture of self-love unchecked by self-criticism, at best an attempt to improve his position in the world.

"It looks as if we were on the verge of a revolution in letters," Zola wrote to his friend Valabrègue. The signals were everywhere to be seen. He read the "bad authors," Balzac and Rabe-

lais, with a new understanding. He seemed to turn now, guided by new stars, as with the intuition of a navigator who understands current and tides, against the school of Arsène Houssaye, Octave Feuillet, Edmond About, the favorites of the Second Empire.

A new star had in fact appeared singularly in the skies; it was that of Gustave Flaubert, author of *Madame Bovary*. Published a few years previously with many deletions in the *Revue de Paris,* the book had evoked persecution for alleged "immorality" by the Imperial Prosecutor and a famous trial in which Flaubert was exonerated. *Madame Bovary* had attained an unprecedented notoriety and success for reasons which the disinterested Flaubert would least have wished. And when it finally appeared, ungarbled, in book form, it produced an upheaval in letters. The unpitying drama of bourgeoisdom with its cold and poised verisimilitudes, produced a shock to all of France. In the time of George Sand and her idealized fiction, of the romantics, Victor Hugo, Merimée, and Gautier, *Madame Bovary*, with its excessively life-like portraits of provincial mediocrities and its picture of the inevitable procedure of life, appeared with all the air of a long planned innovation.

Flaubert, attacked, calumniated, became nevertheless a dominant personality in the literature of the second half of the nineteenth century.

"I am regarded as an immoral and impious man," Flaubert relates. "So much the worse. . . . My book has been dragged through the mire, and treated like a streetwoman, haled before the court."

The music halls sang about *Madame Bovary,* and impersonated her. It was a complete *succès de scandale;* Flaubert was completely misunderstood.

However the striking *relief* gained through interlarding a book with unpleasant and realistic detail, was observed by Emile Zola as he sensed now the influence of this man. He may have longed even to be tried before a court by the Imperial Prosecutor!

In Balzac he had seen a "man of common morals," painting a gigantic canvas, *La Comédie Humaine*, upon which the portraits of rascals and demi-mondaines were laid with far more vigor than those of the good citizens. In the numerous volumes there was a marvelous movement and energy; pathos, passion, stretches of pedantry or of ugliness side by side with grace. It had the rich confusion which returned the confusion of life itself. His grossness, his triviality and his humaneness placed Balzac apart from all the other writers of his period save Stendhal. The crude but vigorously directed novel of Balzac had now passed into the hands of Flaubert, an exquisite craftsman, with a passion for organization.

The brilliant brothers, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, too, were now giving over their historical and critical writing to attempt once more the novel, the medium in which they had at first failed. This time they met with resounding success. They too had a thirst for reproducing reality exactly. But in addition they invented a more nervous and precious style. The classicists had been completely robust and red-blooded folks, they maintained, and the language had been adapted to their nature. But we, they urged, the most nervous, sensitive, obscure of their descendants, must perfect a more supple language. And so the Goncourts offered their sharply-colored, tormented style.

What of the ferment over the novel that was going on in the republic of letters, Théophile Gautier declared suddenly that he wished he had been born a few years earlier or later; for he had arrived too late for the period of romantic revolt and too soon for the realists.

Emile Zola talked for long nights with the impetuous Cézanne. "Often the dawn would surprise us still talking, searching the past, questioning the present . . ." he recalls. The time would come for painters, Cézanne said, "when a bunch of carrots truthfully and powerfully painted would create a revolution in art." The influence of Cézanne in stimulating Zola's curiosity toward

new forms, toward such innovation as he himself fiercely sought can scarcely be passed over. The ultimate direction would be determined by the current and tides which this young writer now watched feveredly.

In turn he writes to the still younger poet Valabrègue, attempting to bring him down out of the clouds. He is delighted to find him abandoning the romantic vein: "You must give us another *Madame Bovary*," Zola cries.

"Of course exact reality is impossible to achieve in a work of art." With all these theories or methods it is simply a question of seeing life "through a given glass or screen. And the screen of realism is most sympathetic to me," he confesses. They all deform nature to some extent, but the realistic method distorts "precisely in the sense that gives the utmost illusion of faithfulness to nature."

He was in the process of bourgeoning; he was all astir with cross-purposes and the intoxicating sensation of visioned power. His poems he realized with regret were to be abandoned, since he now felt the need of proceeding more rapidly, and rhyme "irritated" him. His poems were "sleeping deep down in the bottom of my drawer, perhaps never to awake."

As to his book—"I have read it so many times that I detest it and wish I could forget all about it . . . I am in great haste to go on and write something else so that I may profit by what I have learned in the last months."

The last months had in fact witnessed an adventure of the most signal importance, out of whose colored and dramatic periods he seemed to issue changed, solidified, with a firmer and clearer-sighted knowledge of himself.

Love.

Emile Zola had really known little of love; he had known

little of woman. The disquietude, the vertiginous sorrows of the previous period are habitual symptoms . . . The affair of the Latin Quarter had perhaps increased his resistances, with its dreary implications and abortive, pointless end. Two years had passed which were utterly bare either of exploits or the possibility of some great personal happiness. He had hunted, searched, at times restlessly, with an unquiet eye ever alert, saying to himself, "Decidedly my heart must be wedded to something; a vision is good enough at sixteen, but after you have lived my life and at twenty-three, you need a reality . . . Bitter and ferocious work is not enough to make one forget . . ." And indeed he could not forget ever, despite the fugue of his ambitions and labors.

It was one day, then, in the summer of 1864, that Zola had moved—for perhaps the hundredth time—it is impossible to follow the man's changing domiciles: vainly one seeks to know what mania, what fatality, what quests led him to wander from one furnished room to another? He was now lodged in one of the streets near the Ecole de Médicine, on the Left Bank.

Here he encountered that tall striking-looking girl, whose eyes "had that strange blackness of a child in an old Spanish painting." Her name was Alexandrine Mesley, and it was her parents who had rented Zola his rooms.

It was the inevitable *coup de foudre*, love-at-first-sight. Emile Zola was utterly infatuated.

The circumstances were strange enough. He saw her weeping, fleeing from him. There was pride in her, stateliness almost. Emotion overwhelmed her to a state of hysteria. She was the dark-eyed woman of intense will, of great passions, jealousies, mystery.

What was her drama?

Desire mingled with compassion in him. He learned that the strange girl had in an access of love or desire given herself out recently to her lover. He was a young medical student, and after the end of the university semester he had just gone back to his home in the provinces, as usual for the summer. In this

first love, she, the inexplicable victim of her passions, had clearly found little happiness. And in her suffering, revulsion, despair, perhaps, she found now a new sympathy, a new love. Emile Zola, with a splendid single-mindedness, now abandoned all else for this strange young woman of "towering passions" who fascinated him. In the dizzying leaps and tremolos of their love he knew a joy of a sweep and a danger never touched before. He received the tenderness that he coveted of woman. An ugly man, "of that ugliness which does not attract woman" generally, he prostrated himself in gratitude for her great affection and understanding. There are strong men who are unfailingly humble and infantile before woman. Zola at twenty-four was still a "child of his century." The emotion of love ran febrilely through the gamut of exaltation and anguish. His nerves complained under the strains of a great amorous storm, a first veritable passion and possession. New obsessions formed themselves and haunted his nights.

What then—the thought would return during his insomnia—after these few insane months, if the other man came back? He was her first lover. He had left his stamp upon her; he had some mysterious, prior physical claim perhaps. And although Alexandrine had suffered and had hated, would she resist? Did she know which she veritably loved at the bottom of her strange nature? Would there be some banal drama, violence? Would she have to abandon him?

The man, Balléré, did come back one day in the autumn. He was lighthearted and not far from cynical.

He dissolved their torments.

"Why, stay," he said to Alexandrine, "stay with this brave fellow, Zola, since he loves you. You know that I cannot and do not wish to marry you . . . He will marry you, perhaps, some day . . ."

And so all was arranged! The strange fellow was gone like an apparition.

Would he ever return?

With intense relief Emile Zola had been able to resume his halted work, to take up the orderly train of his life again. There had been the storm, the drastic adjustment. Now they would rearrange their common existence. He was willing, he was desirous, if he could, to have Alexandrine by his side all his life. He came from this emotional ordeal, with his nervous predisposition more accentuated, but bathed, clearer, solider, more determined in his purpose. There is a sense here of his beginning alone in the utter depths, the sheerest realities such as were the naked days in the rue Soufflot, and pushing on to construct his life largely with his two hands.

Later, they moved to more spacious quarters, an apartment in the rue de Vaugirard. Mme. Zola lived with them in perfect understanding and harmony, one feels. In the old circle of friends, Cézanne, Baille, Solari, Pajot, the young painters and bohemians, in poverty or uncertainty, the advent of the striking Alexandrine was noted and accepted in the status quo. As Zola forced his way into the press and began to make himself felt with that excessive self-confidence and resolution that began to distinguish him, a little prosperity came. He continued his modest soirées, consisting of tea on Tuesday nights, at the rue de Vaugirard, for his friends. He assumed more work as his responsibilities grew. He had broad shoulders now and could bear more than others. Soon a pleasant and busy little *train-train* established itself in his daily life.

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He pushed his way into the press, which he regarded as a "mighty lever," a force which he could turn to his own account. He began to write articles for the *Salut Public* of Lyons, a large provincial journal, and the *Petit Journal*, of Paris, the first penny newspaper in France. This year (1865) he contributed a story to *La Vie Parisienne*. For journalism he assuredly showed a talent:

his articles were vigorous and highly opinionated. He acted as if he had an established "program" as if he were campaigning for certain ideas. Through his ironical review of Louis Napoleon's "History of Julius Caesar," and his defense of the Goncourt's much attacked *Germinie Lacerteux*, he came to be placed in the rebels' camp.

He was now also hard at work on *Les Confessions de Claude*, the novel of his Latin-Quarter experiences. "My next book may almost decide my reputation," he wrote to Valabrègue. He realized from observation of Flaubert's and the Goncourts' experience that it would be much better for him if his book were roundly slated. An incident of this time made a particular impression on him.

Germinie Lacerteux, the realistic novel of the brothers Goncourt, had appeared recently and made a stir only short of that of *Madame Bovary*. It was a "clinical study" of the love life of a poor and amiable servant girl, *Germinie*, who becomes brutalized through a series of degrading *liaisons* and finishes up a sordid wreck. *Germinie Lacerteux* seemed a brilliant beginning, a perfectly authentic projection of Flaubert's study of provincial morals. The whole thesis of Bovary was here, dominant, as it was forever afterward in the realistic masterpieces: *a given personality, conceived as a unit in a mass, pitted against its environment, the milieu into which it is born.*

Its vivid picture of gutter life made a strong appeal to the young critic. He threw himself to their defense!

Where was, then, the youth who "turned his eyes away to regard the roses?"

"It is a book of our time," he wrote. "It has the breath of Balzac and Flaubert." They would be reproached, censured, for being "realistic." He began the fight against pudor in art, a pudor which existed only on the surface of the society of this age. From now on there was to be no province closed to the observation of the artist; let the novelists, who were writing for tomorrow, expose

all the sores of the body, since the body brings about the loss or triumph of the soul.

The brothers Goncourt were delighted by this spirited defense of their book, and they wrote to Zola thanking him and hoping for a meeting.

On the evening of December 5, 1865, a pitched battle was fought when the Goncourts' "modern" play, *Henriette Maréchal* was presented at the Comédie Française, that hallowed monument to the dramatic art of the past. Hitherto only plays which were tragic like Corneille's or buffoonish like Molière's, had been permitted. "Avarice could only be puppet-like, instead of human, as in Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet.*" The official theater had become simply a "house of cards."

Now, in *Henriette Maréchal,* the curtain rose on a scene of contemporary life. It was the mask ball of the Opera, with masqueraders talking modern slang and bandying witty obscenities, pursuing each other in a perfectly bourgeois manner.

Even before the curtain rose there had been a menacing hubbub throughout the hall. A letter signed Pipe-en-bois had been sent around among students of the Quarter, urging them to come and riot at the theater. It is understood to have emanated from one Georges Cavalier, a "dealer in manifestations." Zola, who at the invitation of the Goncourts attended the first night, saw the most riotous and disorderly evening which the Comédie Française had ever witnessed. The partisans of the play, such as Zola, applauded continuously. A man rose up in a balcony, and in a hysterical voice cried: "What a shame for the Comédie Française!" Exasperated bourgeois rushed up to the box-office and demanded to hear, since they had brought their families and had paid their good money. Edmond de Goncourt standing in the wings and looking at the cauldron of the auditorium was seized, whether from fear, rage or weakness, with a vomiting fit. The tumult was permitted to go on strangely enough for six days, the acting continuing with a persistent malevolence.

But note in the immense diary of the Goncourts, under 26th of December, 1865: "What a big hit! In the streets people who meet each other, in the cafés, people who talk; all Paris shouting about us into our ears."

The Goncourts were finally made, after years of the most confined literary success. Zola looked on with envious and understanding eyes.

For the past eighteen months he had been leading a dual life: in the daytime, a clerk at Hachette's, at night an author driving along through his first novel. The conception of "Claude" had been formed three years before at the rue Soufflot. A young poet, with his pubescent ideas of the good and the beautiful, is flung by poverty into the sordid existence of the Quarter. Love which had been conceived as a spiritual experience, is known in its most depraved aspects. Death and disease are casual events which the survivors profit by; mistresses and lovers are bartered like chattels. In despair, the crushed poet cries out that there is no more ideal love, there are no more Mimis and Musettes. These are all lies, all gutter affairs. . . .

The theme of amorous disillusionment is typical of the nineteenth century; it is in Goncourt's *Renée Mauperin*, it is superbly treated in Stendhal's "The Red and the Black," and in Flaubert's *Education Sentimentale*. A bequest to the twentieth century, which begins its love-making without illusions.

Zola was only too aware of what a bad job his own document of disillusioned youth was.

"It is weak in certain places," he confessed, "and still has a good many childish moments . . . At times the observer vanishes, and the poet reappears, a poet who had drunk too much milk and eaten too much sugar. It is the cry of a child who weeps and revolts against himself."

It is clear that his eyes were fixed on the new realistic masterpieces, *Bovary* and *Germinie*, that he wished *to observe*, without moralizing or commenting, *to expose* the workings of the human

species, to be an *eye*, in short. He was informed and forearmed, critically; yet all he could produce was the rhapsodical *Confessions de Claude*. We witness the curious phenomenon of an artist whose powers of execution lag, for the time, far behind his understanding and his ambitions.

Although ashamed of his *Claude*, Zola rose to its defense when it was attacked in the press. Lo, Barbey d'Aurevilly, the eccentric author of the *Contes Diaboliques*, abused the book in the *Nain Jaune*. Its hero, he declared, was a toad and had spun out over some three hundred pages, what General Cambronne, who had commanded the old guard at Waterloo, had been used to blurt out in one short ugly word (!).

Whereupon the young novelist secured permission to publish a vehement letter of protest, in the *Nain Jaune*, assailing Barbey as the *Catholique Hysterique*. In his polemics Zola had a particularly provoking and forensic style; he displayed a vigor and insolence not yet born in his books.

Claude was as badly received as the *Contes à Ninon* were well received. But some of the attacks were all but arranged for by its author.

"Sir," he writes to Jules Claretie, then an editor of *Figaro*, "I trust that you will be able to give some space to this slender volume . . . I should prefer even to see it abused rather than have some agreeable nothings said about it."

Then he relates to Valabrègue, that he has harvested brickbats everywhere, that he has been paddled right and left. *Claude* had been a callow adventure in "realism" and the immature novelist had dwelt over its more lubricious themes with a solemn and tender tenacity. The critics had noticed this quality, and so Zola could exclaim with a touching and revealing joy, "In the minds of respectable people I am lost! Yet to-day I am known, I am feared and abused. To-day I am classed among those writers whom it is dangerous to read!"

He was being a little premature.

Launched by a few pious outcries of "sordid!" and "putrid!" the first edition of a thousand copies sold out within a few months and a second was printed.

In the meantime, the heads of Hachette were finding the literary career of their advertising clerk a little irksome. They suspected that he was using some of their time and even their organization to do his extramural work. They were right.

On December 12, 1865, Zola had written to the editor of *La Revue Contemporaine* (a M. de Calonne), on the stationery of the powerful firm which employed him:

"I have the honor to send you in the name of Messrs. Hachette and Company, a copy of a new edition of the 'Dictionary of Contemporaries,' entirely revised and brought up to date. These gentlemen would be very much obliged if you presented this work to your readers.

"I am also taking advantage of this opportunity to call to your attention a work of which I am the author, 'The Confessions of Claude,' which you must have received a month ago. It would give me great pleasure if you would devote a few lines of your literary chronicle to it."

Small wonder that Barbey d'Aurevilly had called it "Hachette's little book," in his review. Zola's literary output was not of the kind Hachette and Company liked to be identified with. An agent of the Imperial Prosecutor had in fact dropped in discreetly to inquire about the creator of *Claude,* although no consequences came of this visit.

"See here," they said to him one day, "you earn 200 francs a month here. It is ridiculous! You have plenty of talent and you would do much better to take up literature altogether. You would find glory and profit in it."

Zola most likely had been prepared for such an eventuality. He offered his resignation to take effect January 31, 1866, some six weeks later, thus giving him time to arrange his affairs. He was a little tremulous about the future, but he worked up a

bold front. It had been a dream of his to support himself completely by his writing. With every step in his progress, he unconsciously thrust his nose a little further out and threw back his shoulders a little more. He would speedily become accustomed to the new terrain he had conquered.

Courage he had certainly shown; one can think of no one climbing in French literature with worse connections, and of no one who made count those few he had with such peasant-like craft. He had changed astonishingly in these three years at Hachette's. Then Cézanne and Baille had accused him of negligence and laziness. Now his familiar demons were habit and work. Later on he became fussy and plaintive about the slightest irregularity under the regime of his mother and Alexandrine. He had exhibited prodigious energy, an energy which was becoming something terrible to behold. He saw clearly the trend of ideas in the world of his time, although his command over his own faculties was still inadequate. He had a talent for grasping what was "modern," a vivid sense of the present, of the issues of the day. He had seen and measured many of the other men who carried on the business of literature and journalism, and he was really convinced that they were inferior, that he would soon pass them.

The "rôle of the great poet" was forgotten; in its place his brain began to conceive practical shifts, ideas that could be sold to the press. He spoke of occupying himself a good deal with the theater. He was going to write "for four or five newspapers." He has confidence enough in himself, for is he not familiar with all the lower works of his game? "I wish I could make you see," he writes to his provincial friend, "all the underground channels of literary life here, the wire-pulling, the trickery . . . I have faith in truth and talent. But how it hurts me to see a fine fellow let himself be duped and surpassed by clever mediocrities. How laughable it is to combat cheats with good faith. I would that we who have something in us may be resourceful among the adroit ones; that we may have all the ruse of those who have nothing

but ruse . . . We are impatient, we desire a speedy success—why not admit it frankly—it needs then that we build up our success."

He defends himself for having worked hard over the publicity for his two books.

"Do not misunderstand me. Adroitness is not a matter of lying to oneself, of being dishonest, and providing a book for this or that taste. It is a matter, once the book is done, of not waiting for the public to come to you, but of forcing it to caress or insult you. I know that an attitude of supreme indifference would be more dignified; but as I have already said, this is an impatient age . . ."

He felt "a rage to lift himself up by the bootstraps." Was he not afraid to exchange the regular wage for the hazards of letters? And what of the gourmand cultivated in him by regular and prolonged debauches of eating? No. He had plans. "Above all," he counseled, "one must come to Paris with definite opinions, plans of action." Done forever with "shutting himself up in his pride and his scorn!" What was the champion of truth and justice going to do? Compromise? Ah, but only enough to advance all the more effectively the cause of truth and justice! "At any rate I have faith in myself and I am marching along boldly."

Out only three months and the little book has sold 1,500 copies!

CHAPTER VI

IN THE MARKET PLACE

It was not with a long poem, but with a feasible and "commercial" idea that Zola attempted to set himself up in journalism. He had fixed his eye upon one of the more enterprising publishers of the Second Empire, a M. Henri de Villemessant, who was an extraordinary, a gargantuan, almost a legendary character of this curious period.

There was a good deal of the comic-opera and the baroque in this Empire, which Villemessant and his new protégé pandered to. It has even left the stamp of its mediocre grandeur on the face of Paris, in its palaces and its planned streets. A monument to the trivial and corruptible elements in the French, it would have been completely absurd had it not its epilogue of blood and disaster.

The bourgeois Empire of Napoleon the Small had already reached the zenith of its power and begun to wane in the year 1866. Its splendor and gayety, its material brilliance persisted for some years as the catastrophe prepared itself. Political freedom had not yet been restored, and in the absence of such license there was a compensating liberty of manners and tastes: it was the golden age of couturiers, the day of crinolines, of masked balls, of trivial amours, of gluttony. At his court Louis Napoleon, lack-

ing true magnetism or energy, sought to set a tone of opulence, wit, beauty, fashion, gallantry for the whole Empire. The imperial court at Compiègne was termed "Sodom and Gomorrha" by the then Austrian ambassador, Prince Metternich.

It was the day of costume balls, given in turn by the great personages of the court and offering vast processions, tableaux, travesties, which were embellished with extravagant exoticism by elephants, banana trees, negroes and redskins. At one of the Princess Metternich's masked balls, an admirer lavished 25,000 francs on camelias alone. Napoleon himself would appear among the revelers in costume and though his limping gait would betray him easily, the word was out not to recognize him. Beneath the mask a passion for intrigue had sprung up everywhere.

In the half-world there were many odd institutions, such as Arsène Houssaye's intimate ball, which having sprung up spontaneously through the surreptitious visit of two masked society women, became for a long time the favorite repair of both court-society and the *demi-monde*. In the pretentious mansion of the millionaire romancer and dillettante, with its fabulous Gobelins, its precious bibelots, its Sèvres and Saxony china, there was a mingling of statesmen and artists, of actresses and duchesses. The two Dumas, the Duke of Alba, Théophile Gautier, Offenbach, Gustav Doré, the former premier Thiers, and many notables would be entertained by the notorious Cora Pearl, or the beautiful Hortense Schneider, not to mention a youthful actress named Sarah Bernhardt who was just rising to fame. The identity of the ladies would be guarded, although their carryings on, their reception of unconfined compliments and advances were the subject of delighted whisperings in court circles.

Metropolis that she was, Paris was yet a small town. At the "absinthe hour" (five o'clock), everybody who counted in the fashionable or artistic world promenaded along the few blocks of the boulevards bounded by the rue du Helder and the rue Le Peletier, before the Café Tortoni, the Café Anglais or the

Café de l'Europe with their open terraces. And from midnight to two in the morning, this fashionable mob issued again from the surrounding theaters, all known to each other, saluting or ignoring each other, and all tasting at this hour the scandals of the day, the gossip of the court, the green-room, the salon, the studio.

They sinned more through complacency than incontinence. The favorite literature of the boulevards was the tepidly licentious novels of Arsène Houssaye and Edmond About. Here *liaisons* were steeped in musk and rice-powder. Adultery was softened and beautified: the courtesan was an "angel," her trade was a mere *pêché mignon*, lovers and seducers were virile—oh extraordinarily so—handsome and high-minded. And as for the cuckolds, they were funny!

In the theater the fashionable and artificial plays of Dumas fils, of Scribe and Emile Augier, delighted the crowd. The comic operas of Offenbach and Meilhac-Halévy such as *Orpheus* and *La Belle Hélène*, with their obscene refrains, their approaches to nudity and their allusions to known persons, ravished this frivolous mob.

Villemessant, the Barnum of the French press, was a creature of his age, and his journals like those of his rivals mirrored its frivolities faithfully. Little space was devoted to politics or real news; only the bizarre or the scandalous was sought out.

His first venture had been a weekly newspaper called *La Sylphide* under the patronage of the famous danseuse La Taglioni. The novelty of this periodical was its perfume, with which it was heavily impregnated as it left the presses, thus flattering the nostrils of its readers with an esthetic delight that no other journal offered! Villemessant had made a profitable contract for exploitation with a large perfumery house. But after a time many of *La Sylphide's* subscribers began to sicken of its persistent odors and its vogue declined.

Villemessant launching one new venture after another, and gladly involving himself in a succession of scandals and libel suits, finally conceived the idea which has come down to us as the *Figaro*. His scheme was to divide the paper into departments of gossip, news, drama, variety shows, miscellanies—above all miscellanies.

From its very beginning, the *Figaro* had had a marvelous reception from the boulevard public. Above all the publisher had a passion for new talent, and the appeal of the *Figaro* (as well as *L'Evènement*, its sister journal) was chiefly through the wealth of fresh personalities which it paraded. Villemessant nursed his "discoveries"; he knew too well how fleeting was their value, and he was prompt to discard them. Over a long period of years, France's foremost writers were launched by this monstrously vulgar man.

Zola, a serious young man of a somber face, which always wore a worried frown, looked at this world through the lenses of his pince-nez with misgivings. The germ of his reflections took shape later in "The Belly of Paris," one of the strangest of his novels, where *Claude Lantier* speaks of life as an eternal warfare between the fat and the thin. The *fat* are the contented, the shopkeepers, the pillars of society; the *thin* are oppressed, and glower with hunger, hatred, or revolt in their hearts at their adversaries; scheme for their downfall. . . .

Before quitting Hachette's in January, 1866, he had talked with a M. Bourdin, son-in-law of Villemessant, proposing for *L'Evènement* the plan of a literary "column" which would give notes, news, extracts and advance "indiscretions" on the world of books much in the manner of green-room gossip. Villemessant was interested at once, and with typical promptitude had asked Zola to come to see him.

Zola was frightened by the great man, but his stammered tale became increasingly articulate and wound up with an accent of

ardor and energy that caught the ear of the impresario. Villemessant came to an immediate agreement with him.

"For the next month *L'Evènement* is open to you. All you send in will be accepted. At the end of that time, we shall see what sort of stuff you have in you."

And announcing once more in the newspaper, his grandiloquent program, he presented his new and deeply impressed contributor in the following vein:

There is lacking in *L'Evènement*, in order to render it complete, a department of literary criticism . . . I have added to my staff, for this work, a young man versed in all the arts of bookmaking, with spirit and imagination, whose books, few but excellent, have produced already a sensation in the press. To name Emile Zola, is not introducing an unknown to our readers.

My plan, conceived together with my new contributing editor, is novel: to spy on a book the moment it is out, and even before if possible, to give an appraisal impartially, succinctly; to be informed of special news with regard to books—to be in short the diverting reporter of books . . . This is the rôle of M. Emile Zola.

If my new tenor succeeds, so much the better. If he fails, there is nothing simpler . . . I erase his act from my vaudeville.

I have spoken!

HENRI DE VILLEMESSANT.

The "new tenor" fell to work with informed enthusiasm. The title of his department he made: Books of To-day and To-morrow.

The columnist filled his articles with "timely tid-bits" and with the kind of shop-talk he had learned at Hachette's.

Soon, he has completely acquired the technique and the tone of one who desires above all to astonish his public. His training under Villemessant in this respect, is thorough.

He makes further, an announcement for his readers:

I mean to fulfill my little task with the good-will and for the sole pleasure of my public . . . Since I have charged myself with such an ungrateful job, I want to do this work only so long as my readers find some pleasure in it. If I may make so bold, I should like to ask the subscribers of *L'Evènement* to vote on the 28th of February [end of trial

month] in favor of my retaining the throne or abdicating. I promise to conform to the wishes of the voters!

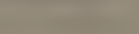
After this month, then, of such equivocal literature, Emile Zola in an agony of suspense presents himself to the cashier's window. He finds a bank-note for five hundred francs!

Villemessant had presented him to his staff, in his loud voice, with his gesticulating limbs and his jovial and domineering air:

"Ah! This fellow is all right . . . Look here my chicks (so he would refer to his artists)! This cadet is going to clean you all up. He has talent to give away, has he—this scare-crow—with his suspicious and whining air, his look of hard luck, like a discharged butler, and near-sighted, at that, and all buttoned up. With all that, I tell you, he is going far. He is going to clean you all up!"

And he roared with laughter, shaking his paunch and slapping his buttocks, as he introduced the shrinking provincial to his men. The scriveners welcomed him, hypocritically; the hands reached out to this new arrival. Scared and blushing, he was the latest protégé of the great impresario. One wonders if even Villemessant knew what an extraordinary machine had fallen into his hands.

Zola's elation was pardonable. For him, who had failed to gain any kind of diploma or degree, the five hundred francs were as a metallic diploma in literature.



The press in the second half of the nineteenth century had become the tremendous machine we now know it to be, an immense vehicle of vulgarization, possessing at least the virtue of freeing men of letters from dependence on the court. For Zola, who was uncomfortable in society, who could have had no hope of succeeding as a romantic poet before an imperial court, the press was a

mighty weapon, *a great lever* as he called it. Writing as he was for the newspapers of the "opposition" with their wider democratic following, he would become intoxicated with the sense of his power.

He would become positively drunk, vertiginous with ambition. The thought was always associated with climbing to a high perch on the roof of his house and looking over the inert body of Paris with its millions of people. Twenty years later he related to Edmond de Goncourt, that it almost caused him shame to think of the excess of confidence he felt in himself. "He had no definite idea of what would happen to him, of how he would realize his longings for success; he knew only that he had faith in his effort."

One day he climbed to the roof of his house with his friend, Pajot, and mounting still higher to a sort of pent-house, they stood there declaiming on the future. Pajot, who later became a commissioner of police for Paris, amused himself by making water down the chimneys of the tenants, while Zola contemplating the capital spread out before him, felt his brain go dizzy at the thought of conquering her.

But how?

Still backward at making friends, he had clung to those men who had come up from Provence with him, Cézanne, Baille, Solari and Marius Roux. The idea came to him from time to time of forming a group. He had written to Baille:

"I have had the idea these days of forming an artistic circle, when you and Cézanne come to Paris . . . a sort of club. Our weekly meetings would be a means of communicating to each other the thoughts we had had, the things we had been doing during the period. At any rate it would lend courage to feel the ties of friendship in the midst of the struggle, to pass a pleasant hour together during the week, drinking and smoking a pipe."

Such a group did form of itself. Through Cézanne and Solari, Zola came in contact with a circle of young painters, Manet, Guillemet, Claude Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley, and Fantin-

Latour. One must add also the names of some writers, Théodore Duret, an art critic, and Duranty, a young novelist who would meet them at the Café Guerbois on the right bank, far up toward the workers' quarter. It was out of these animated gatherings that there grew the famous "Batignolles School" of painting.

In the minds of these unknown and somewhat militant young artists there was a ceaseless ferment. The economic and spiritual upheavals of the mid-nineteenth century seemed to have a parallel in the world of painting, where the spirit of experiment and resistance to tradition was now evoked to an extraordinary degree.

The business of forming a band, of fighting the authorities, and gaining the ear of the public, has now become a system, a tradition in itself. At that time the last great artistic battle had been fought in 1830, around Hugo's *Hernani;* but since then artistic controversies had been subdued or consisted only of individual disputes.

The battles of the "realists," the "impressionists," Zola's campaigns for "naturalism" and all the subsequent public campaigns are characteristic of the modern era with its dense population centers and the numerous vehicles for reaching and swaying the multitude. In the days of paternalism in art, it had been only a question of convincing a prince or a minister. Now a big voice, a "demonstration," the "mighty lever" of the press, could be used to harass the faction in power. The press became the plain of battle for art and literature; skirmishes, maneuvres, pitched combats took place in which all could take a part. Artistic dynasties were reared and demolished systematically in full view of the nations.

And strangely enough it was in Zola that the big voice was found that could raise the alarm. A golden opportunity presented itself to seize the center of the stage; during the official salon of 1866 a campaign began which afforded some interesting target-practice for the biggest voice in Europe.

Three years before, during the International Exposition of Paris the Emperor had set aside a special hall for the new painters who were associated with Manet and who had been refused admission by the jury of the Salon. The traditional French school of painting, dominated by the later period of Raphael, and believing in fixed rules of drawing and coloring, found these new men monstrous. At this time, the proper thing to paint was something like Cot's "Paul and Virginia," who skipped along, as you will remember, hand in hand, through a decorously arranged forest before the oncoming storm. The subject was generally a literary one with a predilection for historical or dramatic themes. There was a deadness, a gloom about all these paintings, a lifelessness that we find to-day in the illustrated barber's calendars whose souls hark back to the Second Empire.

There had been some stir previously over the admission of Delacroix and Courbet, whose ardent color and vigorous drawing were displeasing and a little outrageous to the Institute. But Manet, a disciple of these men at the start, had aroused the most violent objections by his more daring and obvious departures. This brilliant and somewhat prankish young artist, like the other new men, conceived of objects as masses of color in relation to each other. A head was one block of color, a blue coat was another, a yellow wall still another mass, all treated in relation to each other and forming bold and un-representative harmonies. There was an attempt to build up life and movement, as well as a sense of volume or depth, through the sheer power of pigment. There was moreover an analytical effort on the part of men like Monet and Cézanne, to break up or extend the outworn color scale, to penetrate to richer and more complex components. On top of all this a tendency developed among the younger men to affront the prevailing taste by a swing in subject to the realistic (in key with literature) or even to the Baudelairean and the satanic.

Manet's "Lunch on the Grass" with his nude in the foreground surrounded by fully dressed men—the clear flesh tints in a bright

light contrasting strongly with the dark clothes of the other subjects, was taken as a piece of unbridled effrontery by the group who ran the Salon. It had been indignantly rejected, and the colleagues of Manet had been received with jeering laughter. They were even associated in the public mind with communists or republicans; and the painter above all who excited their derision was Cézanne! He, they said, was simply a lunatic; he did not even "know how to draw." For in the schools such as I have described, he had failed to win either medal or diploma!

This year (1866) Cézanne, knowing that he would be rejected, arrived on the very last day before the jury of the Salon with his despised paintings. He was greeted with howls, cat-calls and hisses.

The intransigeant youth, in a rage, sought to precipitate a battle by writing a letter to the Minister of Fine Arts demanding another "*Salon des Refusés.*" His vehemence and excitement marked him out as the most "demoralized" of the young revolters.

Emile Zola, who had long ago admitted that he hardly knew "black from white," followed the conflict with passion. He conceived the idea of writing up the Salon of that year. Did not every French man-of-letters at some time turn art-critic?

He made the proposal to Villemessant to do a series of articles on the Salon for *L'Evènement,* and his chief, scenting "scandal," promptly accepted the idea and commissioned him to do a series of articles, which were to appear twice a week.

Zola now threw himself upon the enemy with ferocity. Coached by the painters Cézanne and Guillemet, he attacked the system of the jury itself at first, in a series of articles called *Mon Salon.* "The Salon," he said, "was not the work of the artists but of the jury." There was a supposedly liberal system of selecting the jury, but like all loose democratic procedure it had come to be abused by coteries which now pushed through a whole list without opposition. He related how this was done, intimating even details of their bargaining and of their bribery. Then he reviewed the exhibition. As he went through the halls, he found

a deadly sameness; it was all a dreary waste to him. There were only nine or ten "real men" among the three thousand canvases, among them Monet, Pissarro, Daubigny. Courbet, he said with the bold assurance of perfect ignorance, had passed his prime; and Corot would do better to substitute "for his nymphs, some stout peasant girls!" All the walls were covered with perfectly respectable and perfectly nil paintings. Assuredly he could not blame the jury for the mediocrity with which the painters they exhibited did their task. But look, let us see *what they had rejected?* Manet and his whole "Open Air" school. Zola burst into a panegyric of Manet, the most "living," the foremost painter of their time.

These articles appearing from day to day aroused great interest. Since Manet was considered an "eccentric" or a notoriety seeker, his defender must be equally mad and avid of scandal. Painters especially are the most jealous and touchy of all men by nature; they are sensitive to any censure or any effort to change the prevailing vogue, involving as it does the very bread in their mouths. In a flood of letters, in comments of other newspapers, Zola was called in turn, idiot, scoundrel, scandal-monger. He was even declared to be insane: it would need "several dozen strait-jackets to conduct him to Charenton," the famous sanatorium outside of Paris.

Villemessant was at first tickled by the uproar his art-critic had provoked. These articles were calculated to provoke fury. There were lacunae owing to his very general grasp of the subject, and also to his own partiality. He expressed his theories in terms of literature rather than of painting. He had no reverence for names that were burdened with the honorable weight of medals and decorations. And yet he possessed the great virtue of bringing a fresh attitude from the outside, one which his very unfamiliarity with the art, his not being too lost in it, produced.

But the public which looks at paintings—and it is really considerable in France—and the painters too were so beside them-

selves that some of them would wait on the boulevards until Villemessant or Zola issued from the office of *L'Evènement* and would tear the newspaper to pieces and stamp upon it along their way. One artist who had been treated with special severity, sent a challenge for a duel around to the art-critic. Finally subscribers wrote in cancelling their orders for the newspaper in goodly numbers. Now this was too much for Villemessant; circulation was his tender spot. And so he seized on the idea of hiring a "neutral" critic and running favorable articles side by side with Zola's slatings. This shift produced little abatement of the sentiment against his paper, and he finally asked Zola to terminate his art-critiques.

It was a glorious hour. Zola could exult like the Goncourts over their play: "in the restaurants, in the streets, everybody shouting about me in my ears . . ."

He went on for a few more issues, lauding Manet and the "realists"; the future would avenge Manet and him! Manet would be in the Luxembourg, along with the others who had been rejected—nay in the Louvre! He presented a whole system of artistic evolution: the artists who had the door closed upon them would be the masters of to-morrow—those persecuted because of their sin of thinking differently from the herd, would triumph before posterity.

When *Mon Salon* came to a close, it was published in pamphlet form and dedicated to Paul Cézanne.

It had been a great campaign—for Emile Zola!

In the preface to *Mon Salon* he says in tones which are perfectly misleading: "I felt myself so little understood, I felt such hatred surrounding me, that oftentimes the pen would fall from my hand in sheer despair."

On the contrary, he had begun to play a rôle which had been the fondest dream of his vagabond youth. In his loneliness and poverty, he had conceived an almost pathological obsession of his being an outcast, a *révolté*, even a pariah. It was Zola—against

the many. The "superb retort of his genius" to the mockery of the crowd! This rôle, in which he had dreamed himself so often, caused in him a mingled rage and ecstasy.

Now he had learned to use the clanging weapons of the polemicist. In this field, in the art of arousing the public by a forensic display, he was to become supreme. Instead of burning with a "hard, gem-like flame" for the perfection of a line or sentence, for the *mot-juste,* he would scheme for a superb "effect" on the public.

"I love the anarchy of our time," he wrote in essays of this period for the *Figaro*, "the overthrowing of schools. I feel great joy in the battle of minds, in witnessing individual efforts, in studying the combatants one by one, the small and the great . . ." These essays he collected later to form a book, *Mes Haines* ("My Hates"). "Hatred," he said, "is wholesome and good. It is the indignation of puissant hearts, the militant disdain of those who are outraged by mediocrity and stupidity."

The articles he was now writing on Flaubert, Janin, Taine, Prévost-Paradol and About, were signed by a pseudonym, *Simplice,* so much was the name of Zola disliked. Their author was a young man who had absorbed all the scientific materialism that was current. The intellectual generation of the Second Empire, that of Renan and Taine, was "positivist," as it called itself. It denied all realities which were not perceived by the senses; by suppressing certain problems, it believed that it had solved them; it had a false and absurd faith in science, at a moment when Darwin and his theory of selection had thrilled the mind of Europe. All its limited operations, and its blind certainties seem to be summed up in the now incredible sentence of Renan: "*The world to-day has no more mysteries!*"

Although he had received a thorough religious training in his

youth, Zola seems to have lost all faith by now. The Catholic religion was to him only the force on the side of the ruling class, crushing liberty and freedom of thought. Religions had been created by man; the universe was no longer anthropomorphic; it was no longer built around man's illusions. Among the more fearless thinkers of the time, there was a sense of the ascent of all life from the "joining of two cells." Experimental science seemed to be on the verge of discovering The Truth. The scientific attitude, perfect knowledge (something which was supposedly just around the corner), would bring about universal understanding, Social Progress, Brotherhood . . . This was the atmosphere that Zola breathed in his impressionable youth. In its very materialism, the generation of Renan and Taine was filled with hope—a hope in the goodness of the future, which was carried on by men like Zola to the end of the century, to be forsaken virtually under the bewildering adversities of Europe in the twentieth century. "We are in the age of the steam-railroad," writes Zola exultantly in his newspapers, "the electric telegraph and other mechanical marvels. Humanity glides dizzily along the steep slopes of science; she has eaten of the apple and desires to know all."

Desiring now to create something on a "grand scale," Zola found himself instead slipping in favor with the fickle Villemessant. He was "obliged absolutely to gain his living by his pen alone, to write no matter what, no matter how shameful varieties of journalism" so that there was bread for Alexandrine, for his mother and himself. He clung on precariously by proposing a novel for serial publication to Villemessant. It was called *Le Voeu d'une Morte* ("The Wish of a Dead Woman"), and was an unspeakable pot-boiler.

It is even more hilarious to recall what critics wrote of him at this period: "The author, despite his incursions at times into realism, has a purely poetic imagination. At bottom he is an enemy of the realities. He makes the most abject and vulgar characters

real to us, but he cannot prevent himself from putting the honey and flowers of his poesy into their mouths." *

There is another reflection, however, of Zola's poor and needy youth. He is beginning to go about in the world; salons: he puts on perhaps his first dress suit. "Daniel" the hero of *Le Voeu d'une Morte,* in society, is likewise overcome "by a sort of awe. He looked at these grave and elegant people and was prepared to admire them completely . . . He had seen nothing of this kind. He told himself that he was suddenly transplanted into some sphere of light. He was ravished by the rows of chairs about the room, where ladies with smiles, showed their necks and their bare arms laden with jewels.

". . . But in reality they are talking like cab-drivers! At first Daniel did not even understand their *argot,* the language of the salons! They were talking of women and horses; it was not quite clear which, for they spoke of both with the same coarseness!

"Then Daniel . . . began to understand, that he had merely been fooled by the setting of the place. These people had neither head nor heart, these women were mere puppets, posing in their arm-chairs.

"And a great pride came over Daniel. He was proud now of his awkwardnesses, of his worldly ignorance. He no longer feared to be noticed: he lifted his head and walked to the middle of the salon. With all his crudeness he felt himself superior to these people: their smiles bothered him not. He enjoyed a dream of pride, and he took the place that was due him tranquilly in the full blaze of the candelabra . . ."

The persistent traits of Zola are here. He was frightfully timid in the company of all but his intimates. His social presence was nil; it was a long time before he was really well-dressed. And he would carry things off, first in timid silence, then with proud, aggressive or exaggerated outbursts, then almost a sulking, frown-

* The tone of criticism changed grotesquely. But did Zola ever cease to be "poetic"?

ing silence—when he was subjected to the irony of the wits—which begot him the reputation of being a "bear."

In the summer of this year, having saved some money from his journalistic winnings, Zola went to Bennecourt, a little village on the right bank of the Seine. Here he fished and boated and wandered among the islands of the river. His old friends from Provence, Cézanne, Baille, Roux, and some of the painters, Pissarro and Monet, would join him at various times. For a time it was like the old excursions around Aix. They talked whole afternoons and nights along the banks of the Seine; only now there was the depressing savor of experience. Each had given short flight to his particular talent; disappointment and hope were known to them. Baille had won a prize of 3,000 francs at the Ecole Polytechnique, and was well launched on his safe and sane career. Cézanne was planning some huge canvas; he was resigned to being rejected for the next ten years. Zola would unfold his ideas for a novel, a crime of love or avarice, studied with complete detachment as a pathological case. His *feuilleton* novel in the *Figaro* wearied him; it was meeting with complaints from readers, too.

The moulds of these men were hardening; perhaps they contained already all the substance of what was *becoming*. Zola and Cézanne for instance, were growing up into completely antithetical personalities. Their friendship was cooling, although neither could explain or would choose to.

In their romantic boyhood they had been madly devoted to each other. Reunited in Paris, they had rushed into each other's arms and wept with joy like the impulsive young Latins they were. But of late Zola had seen that he exerted less and less influence on his friend, and since he himself was moving with little waste of effort toward his perfectly tangible goal he had a tendency to become a little vain toward the distressed young painter whose interior struggle seemed only tergiversation or weakness.

"At this time," Cézanne complained bitterly, "Zola thought already of nothing but arriving."

Cézanne was one of those "lost souls" who gamble everything for their art. With his passion for absolute perfection, with his sense of the greatness of his purpose, he was impatient and scornful of others. The son of a rich man, he looked like an anarchist, a *communard*. He was negligent of his dress, outspoken and blasphemous in his speech. He would fall asleep on park benches during days when he wandered about unable to paint, and would place his shoes under his head that they might not be stolen while he slept. It was not exactly easy to maintain friendship with him. He was a "bear," a character, with a rude crust. At the meetings in the Café Guerbois, the "cradle of modern art," he would sit sulking in a corner and say little except an occasional oath: "It was all *emmerdant!*" At heart he felt keenly where lay insincerity and vanity, and he felt much of this revolt was purely opportunist and conceived almost in the nature of political intrigue. The poseur, the manikin in Edouard Manet, he loathed. As for himself, he sought to destroy the influence of all others; he avoided looking at the paintings that were being made about him.

For Zola everything depended upon his successful communication with the public. His talent, his joy lay in the exercise of a power that would have been meaningless in a cell or a vacuum. Despite his solemn exterior and his discomfort in a public place or among strangers—"I am never given to eloquence," he would say, "save when I am deeply moved and fly into a passion about something,"—despite all this, he had the energy and was hewn in the frame of a public man. For Cézanne there was only the inward and personal joy of attainment.

Zola, meeting more and more fashionable friends, found the intransigeant and generally maladjusted Cézanne an embarrassment. Duranty, one of the literary friends he had made recently, disliked Cézanne, and so did the painter Dégas. They considered him a *raté*, a failure. Only a few of the other men, Pissarro, per-

haps Claude Monet and Renoir, felt his genius in their hearts. Later on, imitations, adaptation of some of Cézanne's tricks or methods appeared unostentatiously in the paintings of the others. Truly the genius of our times, the mad specialist, is difficult for us while he is living. It is troublesome to have him come to our receptions and take off his jacket before all the ladies; it is irritating to witness his worldly reverses, when one is moving forward visibly oneself, step by step.

Cézanne in fact remained a Bohemian for a dozen years more, living a disturbed and wayward existence till he was nearly forty! Then he suddenly had had enough of it, and hurried back to his native province, to bury himself in self-imposed obscurity and silence for twenty years—a tremendously fecund obscurity, out of which he was forcibly recalled only by the genuine acclaim of the modern world.

1 1 1

By the end of the summer, Zola was back in Paris immersed in a mass of work. He hurried on. He had not yet found his philosophy, nor his direction, and the things he undertook to do now were simply an outlet for his terrible energy: sketches and literary essays for the *Figaro;* another serial: "The Mysteries of Marseilles," for a newspaper in that very town, which paid him 200 francs every month for installments lurid with blood and violence.

In the mornings he had begun to work on a labor of love, "a great psychological study," the plan of which he had imparted to Cézanne during the summer. He was so busy that at times he scarcely issued from his house; he would be forced to send hasty messages to the Café Guerbois, saying that he could not appear. He wrote something in the neighborhood of 100,000 words a month!

His position was not very stable yet. In fact Villemessant, disappointed with the result of his *Salon* and his *Le Voeu d'une-*

Morte, was already on the lookout for fresh talent to supplant him with. Zola became now a less regular contributor. Yet this year of mad scrivening was recalled as one of the happiest in his life. "I stay bent over my desk, from morning to night," he wrote to Valabrègue. He was ending up however with serious work. In order to achieve it, he hastened to despatch his other commissions.

He was happy, because he was realizing upon new sources of power in himself. He was beginning to master what he had learned, and there was no longer the great gap between his intention and the finished copy. He had read deeply in Balzac, and sounded the praises of a master who was being ignored by his age.

"Have you read Balzac? What a man! I am rereading all of him. He crushed the whole century with his weight. Hugo and the others fade before him. I should like to write his life. A vast romance . . ."

Thérèse Raquin, completed during this year, and Zola's first work of merit, smacked deeply of Balzac and mastered fairly well the impersonal method of Flaubert and de Goncourt. He had conceived and planned it well. "The novel," he writes in the introduction, was to be "the *objective* study of the passions . . . " In this bourgeois tragedy, he substituted for the antique conception of fatality, the idea of heredity, or atavism, choosing characters who were completely dominated by the pre-determined maladies of their nerves and blood. Each chapter was to be "a study of a curious physiological case . . . Given a strong man and an unsatisfied woman, to seek in them the beast, to see nothing but the beast, to throw them into a violent drama and note scrupulously the sensations and the acts of these creatures . . . I have simply done on two living bodies the work which surgeons do on corpses."

It is clear that Zola at this most sensitive period had fallen under the sway of the physiological thinkers.

The great scientist, Dr. Claude Bernard, had recently opened

a laboratory of physiology at the Collège de France, searching "with delight the single nervous thread of stinking and livid flesh," —thus creating modern experimental medicine. The doctrine which he preached was *determinism*, otherwise, "that intimate connection of phenomena which permits us to foretell their appearance or provoke them; not only revealing nature to us, but making us masters of her." The discovery or "invention" of nervous maladies (the talk of the time), caused also an upheaval in psychology and metaphysics.

Taine, the critical philosopher, who above all moved Zola, spread such doctrines in his famous preface to "A History of English Literature."—"Whether the facts be physical or moral, matters little; they always have their causes. There are causes for ambition, courage, veracity, as for digestion, muscular movement, animal heat. *Vice and virtue are* (*chemical*) *products like sugar and vitriol.*"

Here was a sentence that became a credo for a whole school of literature. And the temperament of Zola was forming itself definitely for the first time in this atmosphere. He was not yet facing these ideas with the boldness and completeness which came a few years later; but, floundering and splashing the water roughly in these first efforts to push off, he resolved upon the formula of literature as a "slice of life seen through a temperament!" And the desire, henceforth, to be "objective" is now stronger than all compunctions such as impelled him in the past to turn away and "cast his regard upon the roses."

The painter Courbet had exclaimed "*Il faut encanailler l'art* (we must make art vulgar)! Too long have our contemporaries been making art out of (romantic) ideas as if they were cartoons."

We have the proper distance and perspective now to be aware of the childishness of much of this dogmatic exaltation; their confidence astonishes and routs us. Alas, we have watched our own evolution since then, as psychoanalysts question their dreams

while sleeping. But Zola, disillusioned and without faith, took fire from these doctrines. The philosophy which determined souls by exterior events called deeply to him.

Thus, *Thérèse Raquin*, his first "slice of life" was written now in a transport of bitter faith in a method. It was as if the rage in him at feeling himself outcast, humiliated, submerged, were soothed thereby. But above all it was a cold rage with which he worked, painting his small epic of murder in a steady and dispassionate prose, utterly unlike the rapturous *Claude* or the earlier pot-boilers.

Set in a dark narrow corner of Paris, this depressing drama of small shopkeepers is related with extraordinary precision. Mme. Raquin, weak and selfishly tender, has given her life ten times over to her sickly son Camille. He with "flesh soft as clay" marries Thérèse, the half-Arab foster-sister whose dormant sexual nature he cannot satisfy. This work is reserved for his fellow-clerk Laurent, a muscular lazy peasant's son, to whom she gives herself secretly. They murder Camille in order to achieve some tranquillity and instead immerse themselves in a tragedy of remorse. The old lady in the meantime has become paralyzed; accidentally she has learned of their crime and her torture at not being able to denounce the two makes a fine macabre picture. There are alternate orgies of repentance and lust before the transfixed paralytic, which end in their mutual self-destruction.

The characters are carefully drawn and set in relief; the mobilization of their impulses is carried out like a brilliant game of chess. The scenes of the cuckolding of Camille, of the steps leading up to the murder are presented in the silent noon-day calm of anticipated horror. Remorse studied to the extreme for two hundred pages further, however, declines in its interest for us as literature. Yet Zola's gift for observation of necessary detail is a new quality which pushed him in fresh directions hitherto untouched by him.

Serial publication of *Thérèse Raquin* now began in *L'Artiste*, Arsène Houssaye's review, which had previously published Zola's brochure on Edouard Manet. There were bickerings and delays, requests to tone down objectionable passages. "Good heavens," Houssaye, the old *viveur*, would exclaim with pious dismay, "Queen Hortense herself reads our review." And then this hypocritical old dandy and boulevardier inserted a pretty moral tag at the end of the novel, which being discovered by Zola threw him into a towering rage.

He spoke more guardedly however:

"I authorized you to suppress anything that frightened you. Sentences, whole pages. One could scarcely be more tolerant. . . Only I begged you not to add a single line. I am stubborn, ridiculous perhaps, about insisting on having not a word, not a single line, which does not belong to me introduced into the text. Beyond that I submit to all cuts in advance, even if they destroy the virility which my work may have and which renders it, you say, *dangerous*. . . ."

And yet Zola's position was very precarious. There were the two other mouths to fill as well as his own; and despite his prodigious activity he saw that he must continue for perhaps a long time to eat the nimble bread of the author. Payments would be delayed, publication retarded on various pretexts. There were days of particular stringency in his home—one week for example, when part of his furniture was seized by pressing creditors. Weeks would pass, when through prolonged, if more modified adversity, and the fatigue of enormous labor, Zola seemed unconscious of what was going on about him, of how he was dressed, of what he would eat on the morrow. He had sheltered his mother completely for some years; it had been a point of pride with him, since the days of Hachette. And as for Alexandrine, her character assumed steadily traits of utter devotion and extraordinary courage.

Despite the need of compromising, of bending to the tyrants

of the press, (to such literary heroes as Houssaye) Zola impresses with his courage and a sort of obstinate rectitude.

In October 1867, *Thérèse Raquin* was published by Lacroix, and got an animated reception. Louis Ulbach the famous critic of the *Figaro* denounced it as "putrid literature," as "pornography." The author got Villemessant's permission to reply and did so with spirit. Everywhere in the press, critics waited for this book, waylaid it and hammered it. Here and there a voice arose weakly to call attention to the somewhat brutal talent, as it appeared now, of the young novelist. Quickly it went into a second edition on the wings of a mild polemic. In the eyes of de Goncourt, of Flaubert and even of the great and distant Sainte-Beuve it marked the arrival of a new personality; it caused a watchful reflection.

Sainte-Beuve wrote to Zola, on reception of the book, a critical letter, in which he remarked on the description of the Passage du Pont Neuf (chief scene of the novel): "It is not accurate, it is a fantastic description, like Balzac's of the rue Soli. The street (as I know it) is bald, commonplace, ugly and in particular, narrow; but it has not the dense blackness, the shades *à la Rembrandt,* which you impute to it. This is also a way of being unfaithful to the truth." Zola later admitted the justice, the significance of this observation—the romantic fancy for the ugly or the imposing was an eternal trait never to be shaken off.

At about this same time, with the characteristic distractedness of his youth, Zola had his hand in too many things at once. Longing for a success before the footlights, he and Marius Roux had worked over the dramatization of the "Mysteries of Marseilles." This had been put on in the provincial capital, and he had even journeyed south to see it played with indifferent results.

He turned about and worked rapidly upon a three act play, *La Madeleine,* which he could get no one to accept. It was his third effort at this field, *La Laide,* written while at Hachette's, a play in one act, being the first. Still working at top speed, he turned

La Madeleine into a novel. Beyond this he wrote for various journals, having been almost completely dropped by Villemessant and the *Figaro.*

This second realistic novel, later titled *Madeleine Férat,* was published in *L'Evènement* under the title of *La Honte.* (*L'Evènement* was now run by another publisher, a M. Bauer). It aroused the anger of the newspaper's readers and had to be discontinued.

Madeleine Férat is of the utmost interest in the approach to Zola's subsequent work. He had begun this because of the new hope in his ability to win his way through the novel, feeling that the miscellanies of journalism were bringing him nowhere, and seeking to bind himself to "some long-winded piece of work."

It was another physiological study of the passions. Taine had offered as his ruling idea that human thought was determined by the combination of race, of *milieu* (social condition), and of the period of time. He had developed a completely rational and materialistic philosophy of history. And so, threshing about with the uneven material of this new novel, Zola sought to show "thought as the product of the whole body."—How absurd that most contemporary writers studied only the *function of the brain* on the pretext that it was the *noble organ.* Remove the body and what was there left?—Thus the all-powerful rôle of the sexual act, as the origin and continued achievement of the act of life, became compulsory. The sexual act would be shorn of the shame in which it was hidden, and replaced in its glory under the sun!—a sort of passional mysticism grew in him, as if (perhaps) in romantic compensation for his materialism.

In *Madeleine Férat* he showed "the nostalgia for adultery by a supposed irresistible attraction which swayed all women during their natural lives toward the man who had first revealed to them the destination of their sex . . ." Madeleine (who is of an early maturity) issues from the convent an innocent; in a first adventure she repulses the advances of a satyric tutor and then rushing into the streets of Paris, demands shelter of the first

passer-by—a young man. The next morning she reveals to her accidental host the tormenting oppression of her desires and gives herself to him. She becomes his mistress under the lash of passion, but does not find love. Vulgarly he abandons her; and later she falls deeply in love with Guillaume, a "child of the century," one of those nervous, world-sorrowing satellites of Alfred de Musset. One day her first lover comes back, and the drama comes to a head as she feels herself secretly drawn by this man. "He had left an ineffaceable physical impression on her flesh . . . through a *purely physical phenomenon,*" and after a year of struggle in her "*blood and nerves,*" secretly she knows that she must give herself up to him. And as she kills herself before her husband, and as her child dies, there is a lurid massing of scientific horrors, "scientifically" motivated. The whole theme is, of course, drawn from the most intimate obsessions of Zola and Alexandrine.

The dogma of inherited impulses plays a dominant rôle both in this novel and *Thérèse Raquin.* Out of these skirmishes with the "physiological laws which linked characters closely" came the preoccupation with heredity which formed the whole basis, later, of the twenty volumes of the *Rougon-Macquart.*

In the midst of these muscular struggles and gropings with his art, Zola found himself rising to mark and prominence as a journalist. It was at this time that he was taken by the much admired Edouard Manet to a famous literary salon. In a little ground floor apartment, ornate with boxed evergreens, Paul Meurice, the constant friend and devotee of the exiled Victor Hugo, lived high up in the Montmartre, back of the Place Pigalle. On Mondays he received men of letters, artists and the politically proscribed. The bust of the master, by David d'Angers, dominated these gatherings in which literature and politics combined as the chief topics of conversation. There were always strong epithets uttered against the Empire and the current school of literature and drama, the Emile Augiers, the Sardous, agents of "common sense" who pan-

dered to the court. The habitués were Charles Hugo, Manet, Auguste Vacquerie, Edouard Lockroy the historian, François Coppée, (who bore so striking a resemblance to the first Napoleon) and a youthful lyricist then utterly unfamed, Paul Verlaine, led thither by Théodore de Banville. Paul Meurice, with his long hair, his carefully buttoned frock-coat, which gave him a vaguely ecclesiastical air, presided over these evenings. Here the seed of Parnassian poetry and of the later Symbolist school, both children of Victor Hugo's rhetoric, was sown. Zola was asked to become a writer for *Le Rappel,* a journal of progress which they were founding. . . .

Appearing in this circle, he seemed gloomy, a little barbarous, silent and near-sighted. He was considered a bold and mordant critic who had won his spurs through his rousing "Salon." His rather incomplete, incubating notions on the future of the novel were not appreciated. One day, one of those present related, he praised Balzac ardently, forgetting that Hugo was god here and none other could be spoken of in such lavish terms. Finding himself regarded with coldness he became irritated and stubborn as was his wont and spoke all the more fervently of his chosen master. The atmosphere became glacial . . . From now on, as they worked over their great new journal of literature, *Le Rappel,* his coöperation became more and more "suspect" and he was encouraged to frequent other circles.

Toward the close of 1868, the violence of opposition to Napoleon had redoubled. It was as if the end of the Empire were foreshadowed. Republican newspapers were being launched, one powerful weekly under the editorship of Henri Rochefort, and another *La Tribune* under Glais-Bizoin. This last had on its staff Théodore Duret, the art-critic, whom Zola had met at the Café Guerbois. Through him Zola pushed himself resolutely into this group.

Restless, elated or dejected in turn, a flood of ideas coming to him, half-formed, of the future of literature, longing on the one hand for protected leisure in order to undertake and achieve

a *monumental* work, a prose epic, and on the other, for a dominant rôle in the battles of the hour, he pushed himself on crudely, egotistically, as if in a frenzy.

A friend, Duranty, obscure novelist of the realist school, who died shortly after, commented: "He has an amazing gift of assimilation and of perfectability . . ."

It was at this time that he suddenly came to the decision of moving across the river to the right bank. It was a momentous step, as always in the life of the Parisian writer, to forsake the region of the "*garnis*," the bare attics of his student days in the Latin Quarter and, plunging across the Seine, to live henceforth with his small family in the modestly genteel apartments of the other side of town. The day had come when he felt that "life must be taken in earnest," and packing up his traps he left the rue de Vaugirard and moved to the rue Truffaut in the Batignolles section, near the corner of the avenue de Clichy.

THE RIGHT BANK OF THE SEINE

BOOK TWO

"Their books will be crushed under the mass of mine."

CHAPTER VII

CONCEPTION AND GESTATION OF AN EPIC

"I would borrow of the sciences their broad horizons, their magnificent hypotheses! . . . I would become a new Lucretius."

M. Lacroix, the publisher of Zola's early books, has left us, in memoirs and hitherto unpublished letters, an astonishingly clear picture of Zola in the days before the "dawn of glory."

Impatient, avid for notoriety before the vast public, now coquetting with the press, or his publisher, now resorting to colorful abuse, he struggled mightily to thrust himself forward out of the shadow of others. We must visualize an army of young and old men of letters and the unfamiliar, blunt silhouette of one, Zola, thrashing about in it.

"Believe me," he would cry to Lacroix, "I need some noise more than you do." And then he would add with clairvoyance, "We need men, not books. It is only a man who becomes a success, not a book . . . Ah! you will see the big clatter I shall make!"

M. Lacroix ended by being deeply impressed, by absorbing the contagion of confidence and believing in his future. Thus far even *Thérèse Raquin* had had only a *succès d'estime* which left the great masses of the reading public indifferent.

Zola, launched already into new work, watched the progress of his old book and cursed under his breath at the lethargy of his public. Better a resounding shock than this smooth course of moderate success. He dreamed of new battles, wounds given and taken, invectives, infuriated attacks and retorts. . . . How then, to unloose the salutary storm which he desired, which would overnight transport him out of the shades of literary obscurity?

His chance came. The Imperial censor who had already been severe about *Thérèse Raquin* made up his mind to be pitiless with regard to the new novel. He threatened both the author and publisher with correctional measures to the limit of the law. Lacroix, who had already done terms in prison for some of his famous authors, received this news with little pleasure. He had the whim even of planning a retreat, by virtue of cuts. But Zola did not understand things thus, and—with a stroke of literary intuition which foresaw a whole intrigue!—despatched a fulminating letter to him:

Dear Sir,

I received your letter and it surprised me very much. I know what you have suffered from the courts, and I should have been the first to warn you, had I thought that the publication of my book would have presented any danger for you.

But let us consider it, I beg of you. *Madeleine Férat* has already been published under the title of *La Honte* in the *Evènement*. What has been authorized in newspaper form should surely not be prohibited in book form. . .

Therefore I cannot grant you the right to make the deletions you propose. For me it is a question of justice. My dignity demands that I go on, and front this danger menacing me. And if need be, I shall speak out loud about this affair.

Another reason causes me to refuse the cuts in question. The passage you indicate as incriminating contains the whole thesis of the novel. I took this thesis from Michelet and Doctor Lucas, and I treated it in a dignified and sincere way. I do not mean to admit that I could possibly have been immoral. I prefer rather that the volume should not appear. Beside, *I hope that you will understand my reasons* [my own italics] and will reverse your decision.

He arrives at Lacroix's, foaming with enthusiasm, cheers him p, heartens him and they prepare their artillery together.

"It was a pleasant comedy," Lacroix recalled. "I played a rôle or the benefit of the public, in connivance with Zola."

They made believe that they were quarrelling. Zola was to end a summons to his publisher to put the edition of *Madeleine Férat* on sale. The publisher would stand on his high horse; and he newspapers would take up the affair. Rumors first, slily pread, then angrier notes, then violent interchanges and public eclarations by both parties.

And then as a further exhibit there is part of an article by he hand of Emile Zola which was destined for the *Figaro*, also in M. Lacroix's possession:

There is at the present time a conflict between a novelist and his publisher which has the most curious aspects. We give the following details with reservations. M. Emile Zola has had published in a newspaper a novel called *La Honte*, which is to be issued in book form as *Madeleine Férat*. M. Lacroix now refuses to place this book on sale, despite the fact that he is obliged to do so by a contract with the author.

It seems that upon the serial publication of this novel, a passage of it disturbed the cabinet and the editor of the newspaper was sent for. "We will be tolerant with you," the Imperial prosecutor is said to have said, "because you are strong at court; but take care, the work will undoubtedly be prosecuted in volume form, and there may be consequences."

The editor, frightened, hurried to report this conversation to M. Lacroix, who naturally hesitated to complete his contract before such a threat. For his part, M. Emile Zola is completely determined to make no emendation and to bring the affair into the courts, claiming that that which was authorized in a newspaper should not be prosecuted in volume form. There is talk of sending a summons, and there will probably be a suit.

We are led to suppose that the *Figaro* scented deception and refused to join in the game. Zola sent this "news-article" to Lacroix, with an urgent request to get it published somewhere, anywhere, in the *Temps* for instance.

You will find enclosed the note which was to have gone into the *Figaro*. I find it so complete, so successful, that I cannot consent to waste

it. Feyrnet has just come back. He might be able to give it to the *Temps*.

For my part I have burnt my bridges. My whole column in the *Tribune* to appear Saturday is devoted to our affair. Since no one will aid me, I will aid myself. I feel that you will approve. I am sure that my article will have a great effect.

By the end of the week Zola was impatient already. The campaign was not as hot as he had hoped; the Empire was evidently undecided as to whether it should prosecute. No *communiqué* arrived. And so Zola urges his accomplice to put the work on sale; there is not a moment to lose, if they would benefit by the mild furor. Things were so quickly forgotten in Paris.

And so "all the newspapers were talking about *Madeleine Férat*," he announces in a letter to Marius Roux, down in Aix, dated December 2, 1868 (this statement, again in Letters: Volume II, would appear to have been somewhat exaggerated and premature). *Madeleine*, he explains, is "living in hiding in a cellar somewhere on the Boulevard de Montmartre. She is well, but afraid that the fresh air may make her ill. I hope she will be let out of prison Monday morning. At any rate, I may find myself appealing to the Tribunal of Commerce in order to prove to Lacroix that the light of day will not kill the poor lady. In short, *everything is going well, in fact, too well. Here I am now, a martyr*. The democrats shed tears over my lot. *Ah! these poor republicans, how they are fooled!*"

It was only after these numerous feints and gestures that *Madeleine Férat* appeared on the pre-arranged stage. It was talked about, and sold even better than *Thérèse Raquin*. But Zola had longed for a huge edition, and nothing of this sort came about.

Disabused he went back to the innumerable newspaper articles "which were painful and brought little . . . merely useful." They gave him no repose, they dissipated his energy a little here and there and everywhere. Another theatrical bid for glory had gone awry. He ground his teeth with rage, and as he set himself to a longer and less spectacular siege of the bays, his face assumed

even more fixedly the familiar grimace of disappointment. It is almost an expression of sourness with which these eyes look out at the indifferent world through their pince-nez.

✓ ✓ ✓

It was at this point that Emile Zola, gathering all his invincible energy and his power of concentration, began to overhaul himself.

"I am twenty-eight," he said to himself. "I have six books behind me . . . They are not what I should do. What is it that I should do? I want to do something on a big scale. I want to do 'big machines.' I feel a force within me. I am better than the others . . . I am twenty-eight . . ." He would repeat his age to himself as though he were both conscious of his youth and of the swift passage of time.

An extraordinary plan had been growing in his mind for some months. He ceased all serious writing while he pondered over it, went to the Imperial Library every day, and even took notes on his own reflections.

It is with a certain thrill of pleasure that one approaches now a moment in the life of Zola which is charged with nobility and greatness. It is all the more fascinating because there is so little magic, so little mystery. His mind, concentrated now in intense meditation over all its movements and experiences during perhaps the past ten years became a crucible in which through the sheer power of will all that was mediocre and faltering in him melted away.

"We witness," as the penetrating Henri Massis observes, "the astonishing spectacle of a young man of twenty-eight, at his debut, resolving to realize an immense program and creating beforehand a system of thought for himself, a framework, the scaffolding of his edifice, of which he was solidly distributing the parts . . . Here was an artist, certainly talented, no longer unknown, yet judging that what he had written as yet was inadequate and tem-

porary. He was a 'force' and he knew it in his whole consciousness. He had a will to power that must be regulated, directed, that was impatient to act."

He sought a direction, a philosophy—the philosophy which resumed his whole age. Once given it, he would move forward, never budging, never swerving from his path either to the right or to the left.

Happily, Zola has left us the complete notes which he wrote at this time in preparation for his great cycle. It is the extraordinary exposition of the state of mind of a creative man, an artist, a scientist if you will, with all the personal details of his supplications and agonies, rendered all the more vivid because he was not *facile* and the accomplishment was wrought by a visible travail of energy and pain. Zola has left us his private documents, like an explorer who fought his way to unknown terrain, like a scientist who probed the unknowable, longing that we should follow him, and persuaded of the informatory value of his adventures. What joy it is, then "to know the confessions of an artist full of audacity, who recoils before nothing, and who even ingenuously confides to us his inmost ambitions and desires. We see this powerful and robust genius being born, and seeking to find his particular vision, examining himself, adopting literary ancestors, and posing as an innovator of a poetic formula, of a whole system of thought."

I am convinced that in the field of knowledge there is no department so grateful and so immediately compensatory as the examination of the genius, of the puissant mind, in whatever realm of activity it may find itself, during the moment of creation. In recent years the journals of our great human beings have grown appreciably in meaning to us. It becomes infinitely exciting and illuminating to witness the exertions of their minds in the beginnings and in the midst of their labors. It is thus that Zola's voluminous notes and manuscripts, deposited by his wife in the National Library at Paris, are a precious bequest. They have a peculiar

and immeasurable value for us. Perhaps it is even too great a bequest, for there is almost nothing missing or lost in these ninety gross volumes.

There is a triumphant power of synthesis, of *combination*, which would have brought him a dominant position in any rôle he might have chosen.

Everything of him is here, and it is staggering to consider all of it. Nevertheless I wish to dip into it, to bathe in it, following the curves, ascents, and drops of his inductions, his confessions, researches, borrowings. I wish to approach it and then at times depart in favor of external evidence.

There is something inevitable here, something of the age bringing forth its man, and the man leaping suddenly with a great dash to straddle his age. There is this, despite Zola's nearness to us, (the period is now almost sixty years gone) his extreme humanness and numberless frailties. But time-and-the-man are too abstract. We still love to dwell over the trivial accidents, the numerous proddings and stimuli that in a human life prepare and set a scene.

Thus, the instinct of imitation, strongly marked in him, played no mean part in his enterprise. Balzac, whom he admired passionately, had written the long volumes of the "Human Comedy," novel after novel appearing regularly and building up not only a monument, but a steady labor and fortune—fortune at least for such a man as Zola wished to be—though to the inexplicable and fantastic person that Balzac was it brought only great misery. There was an example still closer at hand; an author, whom I fear Zola read more of than Balzac, though he speaks less of him: Erckmann-Chatrian, published by his own house, Lacroix, and who for years had been proceeding with their popular historical novels of the French Revolution, a romantic panorama of love and war in numberless disconnected tomes.

To abandon journalism, then! He had hired his pen here and there enough without permanent gain. Was he not a man who de-

served 10,000 francs a year! Ah, misery! How these other nincompoops got on!

Add to these external pressures and suggestions, a deep impulse even from boyhood to do something on a vast scale, to do a "big machine." Hugo's "Legend of the Centuries," an epic poem to modern man had appeared a few years before. Was not Zola himself at twenty-one, the author of "Genesis" (only eight lines to be sure), but a thrust at doing a universal theme: prehistoric, past and present Man!

If he could find a publisher who would back him, assure him at least of 500 francs a month for several years, he knew that he could work furiously to build up his "pyramid," as Henry James has called it.

His tormented state of mind is pictured in the "Journal" of Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, who met him for the first time, during this coagulation of his ambitions and motives. The celebrated brothers, with their curious and precious spirit (I must note in anticipation of later dramas of literary envy and hatred that it was Jules who had been the more encouraging and who had written Zola charming letters) were being interviewed by him in relation to their last novel, *Madame Gervaisaise.*

"Our young admirer," they called him, and their relations, hitherto more distant, became intimate in view of the caliber of *Thérèse Raquin*, while their nose for celebrity made one more figure of history go down in the pages of their vast Diary.

"*December 14, 1868:* Our first impression was that he was a little university student of the type of Francisque Sarcey. But as we continued to study him, this rather stiff young man seemed to have certain delicacies, like the modelling of fine porcelain, in the features of his face, the sculpture of his eyelids, the curious facets of his nose. In short, not a little modelled in his own person after the characters of his books, those complex beings, sometimes almost female in their masculinity.

"One aspect of him that struck us was the sickly, pained, ultra-nervous air, which gave you the sharp sensation of being in the presence of a melancholy and rebellious victim of a malady of the heart. In fine, an anxious, disturbed, profound, complicated, shy, not easily readable man . . ."

The Goncourts had corresponded with him for several years before this, thanking him for his review of their book, and saying that his honesty had consoled them for the hypocrisy of others. Later (Goncourt Letters, Feb. 5, 1868), they had praised highly his *Thérèse Raquin*, in which they detected the hand of a craftsman, one who had probed human truth and crime to the depths.

He spoke of the difficulties he was undergoing, his desire and need of a publisher who would buy his services for five years at 6,000 francs a year, thus giving him 500 francs a month, enough to support his mother and himself . . . He wanted to do *big machines*, and no more of those "infamous articles" which he must write for the *Tribune* and other papers . . .

"Infamous, ignoble articles!" he cried in a tone of the utmost disgust with himself. "To pass my time among idiotic people whose opinions I must put down! . . . For I may as well say openly, this government with its indifference, its ignorance of men of talent, rejects our poor writers and throws them to the journals of the opposition, the only ones who give us anything to eat . . . Yes, we have nothing but them . . ."

Then after a silence: "Ah, I have so many enemies . . . and it is so hard to get oneself talked about!"

Zola professed his homage to the Goncourts: "We, the younger generation acknowledge you our models, Flaubert and you. Your enemies themselves admit that you have invented your own forms. It is simply that they will not give you your due!" Then from time to time he would burst into bitter recriminations, repeating to himself that he was only twenty-eight years old, and that there was time yet " . . . in a vibrant outburst, a note of acrid will-power and raging energy."

It was as if he had a desire to wreak vengeance upon the world. His abortive little intrigue with Lacroix, designed to thrust him to the front, threw him into momentary fits of disappointment and bitterness. It would take a longer breath and a longer effort to conquer, since to *conquer* was what he wanted most of all. It becomes clear suddenly how much literature represented a battlefield to this man!

Yes, his "acrid will and raging energy" as they termed it, was grappling with an immense canvas at this very moment. His mind was in ferment. Even the very contact with them and all they represented stimulated strangely by recoil.

In his thirst for originality, for a path of his own, he was secretly rejecting their work and that of Flaubert. He was through with delicate, psychological portraits such as *Madame Bovary* and *Germinie Lacerteux*. That had been done to perfection. The time needed something on a larger scale, vigorous, full of bold relief, peopled with hundreds, perhaps thousands of characters, lives, scenes. Away with the preciose. Abandon even the "*mot juste*" of Flaubert, seek rather the larger rhythms, the broad movements of masses rather than groups, the generalized profiles of types rather than individuals. Yes, he felt a distinct recoil from the Goncourts in himself, much as he had learned from them before, and I take another page from their immense journal, dated a little in advance of this moment (August 27, 1870) to indicate precisely what was going through Zola's mind.

"Zola came to lunch with me to-day. He talked to me of a series of novels which he planned in ten volumes, the natural and social history of a family, which he has the desire to paint through the exposition of temperaments, characters, vices, virtues, developed by their milieux, and differentiated like the various parts of a garden, with 'shadow here and sunlight there!'

"He said to me: . . . 'After all the analysis and the infinitely precise sentiments, like that of Flaubert in *Madame Bovary*, after the analysis of the artistic, plastic and nervous which you have

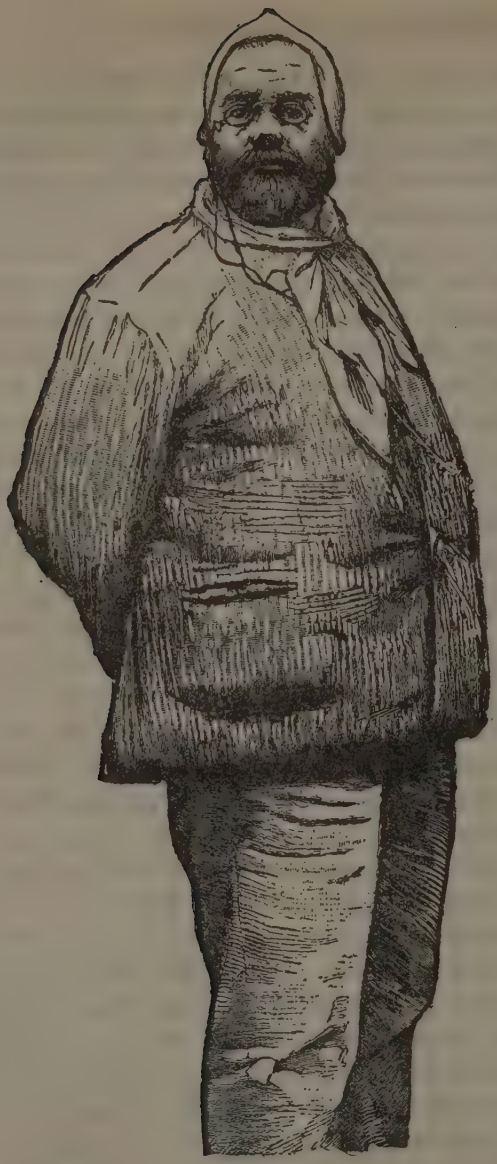
done, after all these *oeuvres-bijoux,* these finely chiselled volumes, there is nothing more for the young men to do—nothing in the way of constructing a personality, a face. It is only through the quantity of volumes, the size and power of the creation, that one can address the public!"

Whatever he had done up to now had been so much preliminary splashing of the oars. What he needed now was to derive from his first efforts and experiences one or two ruling ideas which would serve as the true measure of his talent. He had a presentiment of what he was capable of; the dominant qualities of his nature had been revealed to him. He threw himself into this project with ferocity; and in the ensuing eight months he established cold-bloodedly the direction and the nature of a work to which he would consecrate nearly twenty-five years of his life.

"Nearly all great generations entering upon life," said Renan, "began with an exaggerated idea of their strength and the destiny they were called to fulfill." And it is with such an air that the young Zola soliloquizes, reasons with himself.*

"First," he says to himself, "I am a novelist, and I wish to dominate; now, to dominate, one must convey a certainty, a truth. Taine, my master, claims that there is no great novelist whose work does not contain a philosophy. Yes, even an absurd philosophy, like Balzac's. That is the capital question for me, and I have been searching for one for eight years. . . . I must formulate completely the work which I am going to undertake, I must search for the law to which all things must be submitted, *in order to assert myself and become in turn the greatest novelist of my country and time.* I will it; there is no use in going over that ground, I think. Well. . . . I shall not lack for a philosophy: I shall acquire one in advance. I want a system that is entirely new; one of necessity that is taken from the movement of ideas of my own time . . . What is it? . . . We believe in Science.

* Manuscript-Plans, for *La Fortune des Rougon,* Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.



"THE BEAR"

The future is there, that is the general view. In whatever direction I turn, I see nothing but scientists. Even Sainte-Beuve has declared: 'Anatomists and physiologists, I find you everywhere!' "

I have spoken already of the spread of positivism and materialism in this era under the influence of Lamarck, of Darwin, of Dr. Claude Bernard and of Hyppolyte Taine. The conviction had taken root among thinkers that a final knowledge of phenomena was being established which made it possible to foretell or evoke every occurrence! It was at this time also, that the study of neurology was engaging great interest. Abandoning psychology (the study of the invisible mind) they pounced upon the livid brain itself with enthusiasm, exulting that science was about to "expose the soul."

Thus the romantic fantasy was to be succeeded by the scientific fantasy!

Emile Zola surrendered himself completely to these ideas.

"I am," he says triumphantly, "a positivist, an evolutionist, a materialist; my system is heredity. I have found the instrument of my epoch, and there is no doubt about the power which it gives to a man to feel himself holding it in his hands and aiding the natural evolution of things. I wish to be a painter of life. I must therefore ask of science to explain life to me, to make it known to me."

Ah, it was no longer a time to split hairs over sentiments, *à la* George Sand or de Musset. We must go to the "clinic of love," study rare and curious cases, hysterias, deviations from the normal, hypertrophy, insanity. Zola went to the Imperial Library for six months to study the "passions of man." He avoided the historians and philosophers; and read instead the physiologists and doctors, the scientists.

He read with infinite interest, "The Physiology of the Passions" by Letourneau (a now antiquated work), and found dogmas that fascinated him, fortified his own will-to-believe, his own bias: "*We no longer wish to observe man through the colored*

glasses of metaphysics but as an aggregate of histological elements, fibres and cells, ruled by one unifying power, the nervous system." Here the movements of the soul were considered in terms of an *organism;* there were only needs experienced, or desires to satisfy. . . .

Perhaps it is rather too amusing to think that in six months Emile Zola found a philosophy! It would be truer to say that during this time he discovered a formula, a vehicle.

"My work," he resolved, "will be in conformity with this science. I am going to picture the physiological man. This is my formula; and best of all it will be a new art, a new literature, which will be my own literature, my own art. *I, I alone will be Naturalism.*

"For I am well documented. I have read this, and that. . . . Now I presume to be through with these preoccupations. My place is clearly defined, and that is enough for a novelist; for, above all, before everything, I am a novelist, am I not?"

The dominating, conquering temperament springs from these lines. Why did Zola seek a formula, a program? Because he felt that he must assert himself, that "a man who exposes a system is a man who explains his own character, his own temperament," the better. Thus, how fortunate that he should encounter a theory which by its novelty, its richness, its "modernity" even, satisfied his lust for combat and conquest. He had derived a guiding principle for his impetuous and ardent mind, and it would allow him to study "some fine cases of flesh and brain." It simplified everything, this philosophy which determines the soul by external physical events. It appealed to his mind mightily. For long years he had not been a believer. *Heredity*, implacable, predetermined, would be for his modern epic the Nemesis of the Greek dramas. Far from becoming slave to a theory, which would turn his books into a mass of clinical observations, he saw with a flash of intuition that the long chain of episodes he visioned, the descent of a vast family, of "a world in agitation" would be completely

unified by the force of heredity. Instead of being the victims of the gods' vengeance, his characters, all members of one vast family, would be victims of heredity. It was simply more "modern," more "scientific"; it was no different.

And now having found his road, stubborn, courageous, he would proceed straitly, without swerving to either left or right, and thinking, "Now I can write as many novels as I please."

In his mind's eye there was of course always the example of Balzac his spiritual father. He had been the first to assign to the novel the mission of painting contemporary society without regard for morality or beauty; he was the initiator, the man of science, who had traced the path for the whole nineteenth century. Like Balzac, he too would paint men of different classes, bourgeois, financiers, workers, priests, artists, whores, rascals.

But Balzac, as it is known, had not thought at first of writing a "Human Comedy." It was only after part of it had been written already, that he claimed to have based it all on the borrowed theory of "the animality of mankind." Zola like Balzac borrowed a "philosophy." But leaving nothing to hazard, he devised his general title and his whole scheme of action in advance.

With splendid courage, in a single consistent effort, he conceived a vast ensemble originally composed of ten or twelve novels which, in the name of determinism and the law of heredity, traversed the whole gamut of human society, all the strata, all the professions, Paris, the provinces, the country, during the twenty-five years of Napoleon III's reign.

"No finer act of courage and confidence," says Henry James, "is recorded in the history of letters. The critic . . . again and again returns to the great wonder of it, in which something so strange is mixed with something so august. Entertained and carried out from the threshold of manhood, the high project announces beforehand its inevitable weakness and yet speaks in the same voice for its admirable, its almost unimaginable strength."

Looking about him, Zola also places himself in his time. He

wishes to realize his own "temperament," his own talents *consciously*. Beside him in the field he sees only Flaubert and the Goncourts. For the former he feels a profound admiration, adopting completely his objective method of observing life and his passion for accuracy and thorough documentation. Otherwise the romantic contradictions of Flaubert's nature confused him. With the Goncourts he felt more in common. He had a similar penchant for rare and exceptional cases. Only in this way could he attain the bold relief he desired. Otherwise, their refinement and artificiality palled upon him. He had a presentiment that he would crush them under the enormous mass of his own work. . .

And now Zola set to work on a genealogical tree for his family! He traced the "plan" of the "general work" (counseling himself on precedents, innovations, style, method, all the while) and finally, in brief form, of the individual episodes or novels, for which he made a list of ten provisory titles, stretching this later to twelve, to fifteen, and ultimately to twenty novels.

Would he become the prisoner of his system? Would he be narrowly bound to these doctrines, to this willfully scientific program of ideas, "captive of a doctrine, captive of an era, a family, a plan?" No. The *Rougon-Macquart* became like "the huge hold of a ship" capable of carrying nearly everything that was brought to the dock. With skill and art anything could be forced into stowage. Even the theory of "naturalism," which he had invented for his own purpose, he mocked at later in private.

And the "plan," the family, the history of the time—yes, he followed it, he would return to it again and again. He was one of the most controlled, "scientific," self-conscious artists who ever lived. But he was an artist and there is no true artist who does not escape from his plans, who does not exceed or fall short of them.

Let us return to his notes and plans again. We may observe later how far he either exceeded or departed from them. But

above all it is exciting and fascinating to watch as from a keyhole the state of mind of the artist preparing for the creative effort.

GENERAL NOTES ON THE PROCEDURE OF THE WORK

A central family within which there is the action of at least two families. Growth and expansion of this family into the modern world and into all the classes. The march of this family toward all that is most exquisite in sensation and thought. Drama in the family through the effect of heredity (son against father, daughter against mother). Exhaustion of the intelligence, through the rapidity of the flight toward the heights of sensation and thought. Return to demoralization. Influence of the feverish modern environment on the ambitions of impatient individuals. The *milieux* properly, that is *milieux* of place and of society determine the class of the person, worker, artist, or bourgeois—I and my uncles, Paul Cézanne and his father.

The characteristic of the modern movement is the upheaval of all the ambitions, the democratic élan, the uprising of all the classes. My novel would have been impossible before '89. I am basing it therefore upon a truth of the age: the upheaval of ambitions and appetites. I am studying the ambitions and appetites of a family launched into the modern world, making superhuman efforts and not succeeding, because of its own nature and certain influences; touching success only to fall back; and ending by producing veritable moral monstrosities (the priest, the murderer, the artist). The time is troubled; it is the trouble of the time that I am painting. I must absolutely stress this: I do not deny the grandeur of the modern effort, I do not deny that we can move more or less toward liberty and justice. I shall even let it be understood that I believe in these words, liberty, justice, although my belief is that men will always be men, good and bad animals according to the circumstances. If my characters do not arrive at good it is because we are only beginning in *perfectability*. . . . To resume my work in a sentence: I wish to paint, at the beginning of a century of truth and liberty, a family which throws itself toward the immediate good, and which is overcome by its own élan, by the fatal convulsions of a new world in travail.

Thus, two elements: 1) the purely human and physiological element, with its relationships and its fatal descent; 2) effect of the modern day on such a family, its derangement by the fevers of the time, the social and physical action of the *milieux*.

Observe how the deterministic dogmas offer a neat and ordered plan for a modern epic. He moves upon his subject, carrying the

Préface

Je devrai montrer comment une famille, un petit groupe d'êtres se comporte en s'épanouissant pour donner naissance à dix, à vingt individus, qui paraîtront, au premier coup d'œil profondément dissemblables, mais que l'analyse révèle comme intimement liés les uns aux autres. L'hérédité a ses lois, ainsi que la parenté.

Je tâcherai de trouver et de suivre le fil qui conduit mathématiquement d'une heure à une autre heure. Et, quand je tiendrai tous les fils, quand j'aurai entre les mains tout un groupe social, je ferai voir ce groupe à l'œuvre, je le ferai agir dans la complexité de ses efforts, j'analyserai à la fois la somme de volonté de chacun de ses membres et la pensée générale de l'ensemble.

Les Rougon-Macquart, le groupe, la famille que je me propose d'étudier, a pour caractère et que le débordement des appétits, le large souffle

FACSIMILE OF THE MS. OF PREFACE TO "LA FORTUNE DES ROUGON"

Announcing the Intention of the Whole Cycle of Novels. (1869).

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venant de notre âge qui se pressent aux portes du pouvoir. Partis du peuple, ils vont un peu partout, au milieu, au génie et au vice, à l'héroïsme et à l'infamie. Ils s'irradient dans toutes les classes, ils racontent le second empire, depuis le guet-apens du coup d'état.

Cette étude, — étude physiologique et historique, — qui formera plusieurs épisodes, plusieurs volumes, est, en somme, l'Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille, sous le second empire. Et le premier épisode, la Fortune des Rougon, doit s'appeler de son titre scientifique : les Origines.

Emile Zola

FACSIMILE OF THE MS. OF PREFACE TO "LA FORTUNE DES ROUGON"

banner and herald of Science, and like a profane layman (but really most fortuitously) he swallows his scientists whole, as you will see.

However, there are moments in these first notes, when ideas surge up to which Zola was faithful unshakably through his long stormy life. To understand the enthusiasm, the idealism of the position he takes, you must recall the romantic heritage of France—liberated but recently from political feudalism, preaching social progress through revolution and throwing off the domination of the church.

I have said that there is an urge toward liberty and justice. I believe that it will be long in arriving, while holding that we may be led to a better state. *But I believe above all in a constant march toward truth.* It is only from the knowledge of virtue that a better social state can be born.

My study then is simply a piece of analysis of the world as it is. I only state facts. It is to be a study of man placed in a milieu, with no sermonizing. If my novel must have a result, it will be this: to tell the human truth, to exhibit our machinery, showing the hidden springs of heredity, and the play of environment.

My novel must be simple. Only one family with a few members. All the cases of heredity, either in the members of this family or in secondary characters.

The Empire has unloosed appetites and ambitions. Orgy of appetites and ambitions. Thirst for pleasure, pleasure in hasty thought and fatigued body. Fatigue and collapse; the family will burn like a body devouring itself, it will exhaust itself in a generation, because it will have lived too fast. . . .

I must apply the force, *heredity*, toward a direction. This direction is found; the family will go toward the contentment of the appetite, *fortune* or *glory*, or the contentment of the appetite, *thought*. The social moment is this: all desire pleasure, all seek the utmost physical and intellectual pleasures.

GENERAL NOTES ON THE NATURE OF THE WORK.

Understand each novel as follows: place before you a human case; put two or three forces into juxtaposition with it; establish a struggle between these forces; then lead the characters to the dénouement by the logic of their particular beings, one force absorbing the others or all.

What a marvelous exposition of the post-Flaubert novel is this program! It is so lucid, so logical, so finally the crystallization of the anti-romantic school, that we realize the shocking truth that fifty years were to elapse before anything new was done with prose fiction.

Zola was, above all, the projection of Flaubert. Despite the perfection of his verb, and his genius for resolving ideas into images, Flaubert ultimately became muddy and mystifying. The triumphant method of *Madame Bovary* was too much even for himself. He rebelled at it, to the despair of Zola and his other friends, and sought with diminishing success to project his personality and his philosophy in the more willful, later books. Zola at the present stage is a theorist *par excellence*. Thus his extraordinary influence over the men who later formed his "school"; Maupassant, Huysmans, Mirbeau, Edouard Rod, Bourget, etc. . . . To the exact, objective method with which Flaubert constructed his novels and his characters, Zola wished to contribute the absolute truth of science with regard to human life. And for the young spirits of the time, the idea held an extreme fascination.

He indicates more precisely now:

And I must also have passion. Keep a single and sustained breath in my books, which rising from the first page carries the reader to the last. Conserve my nervous strength.

Take care above all, not to bring up too often the same little man of nerves (Claude, Daniel, Guillaume). Find diverse temperaments.

Write the novel by means of large chapters, logically constructed: that is to say, offering by their very succession, an idea of the phase of the book. Each chapter, each mass must be like a distinct force pushing toward the dénouement. Thus, to see a subject by means of a number of large pictures, some big chapters (twelve or fifteen); instead of multiplying the scenes too much, choosing a limited number, and study them deeply and extensively (as in *Madeleine Férat*). Instead of the flowing analysis of Balzac, establish twelve or fifteen powerful masses, therein the analysis may be made step by step, but always from above. Everybody in the world analyzes in detail nowadays: I must react against this through the solid construction of masses, of chapters; through the *logic*, the thrust of the

chapters, succeeding each other like superimposed blocks; by the *breath of passion*, animating all, flowing from one end to another of the work.

There are two kinds of characters: *Emma* and *Germinie*, the true creature observed by Flaubert, and the enlarged creature observed by the de Goncourts. In the one the analysis is made coldly, the type is generalized. In the others it seems that the author has tortured the truth, the type becomes exceptional. My *Thérèse* and my *Madeleine* are exceptional. In the studies which I wish to make, *I must never leave* the exceptional. Such creations, furthermore, are more worthy of an artist, in the modern sense of the word. It seems that in escaping from the general, the work becomes superior. (Stendhal's "Red and Black"). . . I must therefore do the exceptional like Stendhal, avoiding too great monstrosities, but taking particular cases of flesh and brain.

Here Zola diverges from his master Taine, who wanted novelists to do "general types," in accord with the theory of environment. But is he not merely proceeding with the intuition of an artist, realizing the "temperament" and the idiosyncrasies displayed in his first meritorious novels, *Thérèse Raquin* and *Madeleine Férat?*

I must take, above all, a philosophical tendency, not for display, but to give a direction to my books. The best would perhaps be materialism. I mean, the belief in forces which I shall not have to explain. . . And further not to write either as philosopher or moralist. Study men like simple elements and note the reactions. *Fate* is an old tool, absurd. . . . (Zola avoids thus the old "chain of coincidence" and substitutes a *natural* succession of events.)

Never forget that a drama must take the public by the throat. They grow angry, but do not forget. Give them always, if not nightmares, at least excessive books which will stay in their memories. Useless to stick to dramas of the flesh. I will find other things just as gripping.

Watch the style. No more epithets. A magisterial bearing. But always warmth and passion. A roaring torrent, but broad and of a majestic grace.

Few characters, two or three principal figures, deeply linked, then two or three secondary, attached as much as possible to the hero, complementary or repulsive to him. Escape thus from Balzac's method, with his whole world in every book. My books will be simple court proceedings. Those of the Goncourt will be so crushed by the mass (by the length of the chapters, the breath of passion, and the logical stride) that they will not dare accuse me of imitating them.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BALZAC AND ME.

Balzac says that the idea for his *Comédie* came to him from a comparison between humanity and animality by St. Hilaire: as there are lions, dogs, wolves, there are artists, administrators, lawyers, etc. Then the idea of uniting all his novels came to him. He wished to accomplish what the ancients had not. The historian of morals must be a painter of types, teller of dramas, registrar of good and evil. A writer must have in morals, as well as in religion and politics, a definite idea; he must have an opinion on the affairs of men. The basis of the *Comédie* is: Catholicism, teaching through religious bodies, the monarchistic principle. The *Comédie* must surely contain some two or three thousand characters.

My work will be less social than scientific. Balzac, with the aid of two or three thousand characters wishes to give the history of morals. All his science consists of saying that there are lawyers, rascals, etc., as there are dogs, wolves, etc. . . . He bases his story on religion and royalty. In short his work sought to be the mirror of contemporary society.

My own work will be something different. The frame will be more restrained. I do not wish to paint all of contemporary society, but a whole family, in showing the working out of race modified by *milieux*.

If I accept a historical frame it is solely to have a milieu which reacts. . . . What matters most to me is to be purely naturalistic, purely physiological. Instead of having principles (royalty, Catholicism) I shall have laws (heredity, atavism). I do not wish like Balzac to come to decisions on the affairs of men, to be political, philosophical or moral. I am satisfied to be a scientist, to tell of that which exists, while seeking the underlying reasons. No conclusions, furthermore. A simple exposé of the facts of a family by showing the interior mechanism which directs them.

Balzac says that he wishes to paint men, women and things. I count men and women as the same, while admitting their natural differences, *and submit men and women to things.*

Up to the summer of 1869, Zola continued working on his great plan. He took elaborate notes which form a résumé of "The Physiology of the Passions," by Letourneau; and he made an extensive study of "The Treatise on Natural Heredity," by Dr. Prosper Lucas. He made a careful study as well of the history of the Second Empire.

It was in the treatise of Dr. Lucas on heredity that he found most nearly what he wanted. Observer, *naturalist* that he was be-

coming, there is nevertheless the perpetual evidence of his bias, of his temperament, selecting that which he *chooses to believe or use*. If we consider briefly the character of this obsolete work on heredity, we find that it has adopted more or less the idea of Darwin that there were determinable laws of transmission, and that the whole animal organism on an infinitely small scale was formed in the cells of the embryon. The seed is the miniature of the parents. The inherited traits may show themselves completely, or may rest dormant for a generation. There were so many variants, there were so many exceptions. Then Lucas, further, favored especially the theory of atavism, or reversion to an earlier ancestor, and Zola accepted it from him. Also the theory that characteristics of mother and father were "crossed," the son resembling the mother and vice versa . . . In reality science has never solved the question of heredity. At the time Zola studied it, it was no further advanced than in Montaigne's time, when the great essayist spoke with antique bitterness against "the tyranny of this seed which bears our whole destiny." All that can really be said, is that "certain parents, having certain antecedents, in given circumstances, transmit certain characteristics." Beyond this thousands of incommensurable factors enter into play: Ribot estimates that in three generations there are 1,024 possible influences.

It would have been a marvelous thing if a workable law of heredity and selection had been found. We could explain and forestall everything . . . We could trace back to how a little lesion in the brain of a woman produced an assassination sixty years later . . . Zola hoped that he was pursuing the "experimental method" of modern science, that instead of writing incredible or merely diverting romances, he was displaying the natural and inevitable workings of human life, for the first time! He would take a slice of life and submit it to varying doses of environment, epoch . . . the novel would be history, medicine . . . How droll this all sounds now! Emile Zola became the *deus ex machina* for the 1,200 characters of a vast cycle, which after much deliberation

he titled, "*The Rougon-Macquart, natural and social history of a family under the Second Empire.*"

This vast edifice he dreamed—never fear, it was no jest with him—having found the design for it, he would go forward and build it with quenchless energy and will, block by block, brick by brick. And the bricks, the material? Where would he get them? Ah, *there* was the inherent weakness of the whole stupendous plan. (The weaknesses are ample and there will be time to consider them.) He would collect his stones, his rubble, his brick, as he went. The inexperience of life, from which he little dreamed he suffered, mattered little to him. He would *live into* this great house he was building. He would observe, document himself, gather material, as he went, as he worked, as he traveled. With pencil and note-book in hand he would study life (in great haste because there was only a brief lifetime to gather all in), and amassing stupendous detail, becoming as Huysmans termed it solely "an eye," he would cause the twenty volumes of the *Rougon-Macquart* to issue from the quiet of his cabinet, like a great river. . . .

Zola took his plans for the series of ten novels, as he conceived it at this time, to M. Lacroix. He condensed his observations and stressed the point that it would all be "very living," full of striking relief, of light and shadow, and that the scientific aspects would be intrinsic rather than obvious.*

This was in the spring of 1869. M. Lacroix listened to the young man's grandiose schemes and to his extraordinary proposal that they sign a contract whereby the publisher was to give him 500 francs a month for five years, Zola to hand in two novels a year. Lacroix, who by now had great confidence in Zola, agreed to this, despite the fact that his business was really in poor financial condition.

* In the primitive list of novels, although much changed subsequently, the theme of *L'Assommoir,* as of *La Débâcle,* and most of the others may be discerned.

They signed a memorable contract with some curious features. The advance drawings which Zola was to make were to be covered by royalties at approximately 13 per cent, and by payments received from serial rights beforehand. In order to make it "regular" he would sign a promissory note for three months, each time he drew 500 francs, which would be renewed indefinitely until receipts retired it. This innocent detail eventually caused a great deal of misery for Zola.

But for the once he looked into the future with much hope and with decided notions as to what his path would be. There was a sense of security again: in addition to the 500 francs which Lacroix had contracted to give him, there was nearly 500 more per month out of weekly correspondence, and commissions for the newspapers. He could now set to work, following inalterable habits already erected. In his personal life he would be a brave, orderly little bourgeois; it would permit his mind all the more freedom.

In the organization of all his habits which came about now there was a domestic matter which must be regulated: Alexandrine now occupied a permanent place in his life. To recognize and establish this—in the period of calm immunity which lay before them—they decided, not without humor, that they must marry.

And indeed Alexandrine had been sensible and courageous; she could bear bleak days without bitterness. She disputed with him only about trivial matters. She saw to the fine dinners which were now held for Zola's friends every week. Alexandrine in fact rose steadily to her situation: one sees her weeping with chagrin as a demonstration is made against Emile Zola's play in a theater; vying with another author's wife in the matter of sales; being received one day by the Queen of a great nation!

And so in the late spring of 1870 (May 31), Zola's circle of compatriots, Cézanne, Philippe Solari, Valabrègue, Baille, were

not severely astonished when they were asked to accompany the couple to the Hôtel de Ville of Paris, where the documents for a legal union might be procured.

It was a calm ceremony, and the party repaired to a Montmartre restaurant for lunch afterward. Soon, warmed with good fare and wines, the momentousness of the occasion was all but forgotten—and the bride too no doubt—as the group of young painters and writers plunged into a voluble and ardent discussion.

Zola spoke animatedly and logically about his projects. These meetings abroad were in fact more and more rare now. His acrid ambition possessed him and held him chained to his room and desk. It must be observed that he dreamed with astonishing fullness for himself: no small place in the century would do! And now with his domestic life on a firm footing, there would be no nonsense about him: there was too little time! He would withdraw even further from the world which he was to write about all his days. . . .

He was a stout young man at this time. His nose would perk up, or his brows lower in that apparently worried frown which is caused by nearsightedness. A defect in his speech made him lisp a little, saying "*veunesse*" for *jeunesse*. He gesticulated much, and had the habit in common with Cézanne of talking with great simplicity, with almost an affected crudeness, using many "Ah's!" and many "*mon bon*" and "*mon vieux*" at the end of his sentences.

In one of his later novels, he confesses that "he held the married state to be an indispensable condition for the accomplishment of all good and substantial work. The theory that pictured woman as a destructive creature, who killed the artist—pounded his heart, fed on his brain—was a romantic idea which facts dispelled. For his own part he needed an affection that would guarantee tranquillity, a home where he might shut himself up, so as to devote his life to the great cycle of books he dreamed. Everything depended upon a man's choice, and he believed he had found what he needed—the daughter of tradespeople, with-

out a penny, but handsome and intelligent . . . Emile Zola's was not a *mariage convenable;* no happy relative came to aid in setting him up in life. It was what is known as a "marriage of inclination."

The Zolas, the mother and the wedded pair, now moved into new quarters at 14 rue de la Condamine, high up in the Montmartre. Their house was what is called a little "pavilion" and had a garden. The rooms were so small, that when they put a piano into the dining room, they had to cut part of the wall out of the way. But it was cheerful, and it was a private home, without a "concierge," the dream of every Frenchman . . . The house was reached by crossing the courtyards of a larger building, given to flats and facing the street. By opening an iron gate one gained admittance to a small garden with a tiny lawn, over which a large plum tree cast its shade, while directly in front of the pavilion was an arbor of Virginia creeper. There were three rooms on the ground floor and three on the first, "all like little drawers with partitions as flimsy as paper." A life of complete tranquillity and order set in for Zola. His wife and mother fussed over him. He would become childish and petty over having his things in their place, sometimes almost weeping in vexation. His nerves grew tense under the prodigious effort of his daily life. He became a "temperament" given to accesses, now only mild, of hysteria, in which wife and mother suffered not a little the travail of the *Rougon Macquart.* In the afternoon he fulminated for the press, usually *La Tribune,* the receptacle of his modern ideas:

"If I kept a school of morals, I would hasten to place *Mme. Bovary* or *Germinie Lacerteux* in the hands of my pupils, convinced that only truth can fortify and strengthen generous souls."

In another article, he wrote a profession of faith: "I would borrow of the sciences, their broad horizons, their magnificent hypotheses . . . We must separate ourselves violently from the lyrical school of 1830. If I were a poet, here is what I would do.

I would become a new Lucretius. Dream of reconciling poetry and science."

It was at this time that he met Flaubert, whom he addresses, for the beginning, as *dear master*. They were destined later to become great friends. "My solid friend," Flaubert calls Zola in a letter some years later.

The word "solid" occurs too to Paul Alexis, Zola's "shadow," the Boswell of his early years who had come up from Aix to meet him for the first time in the month of September, 1869. Alexis, a young budding man-of-letters, who in the same school at Aix, had learned to know Zola's work by heart, was warmly received, and a great friendship sprang up from the first hearty handshake.

"Ah, here is Alexis! I was expecting you!"

It was a very happy moment. Zola had a certain "*bonhomie*," a heartiness, and an air of great simplicity as he ripened.

On a fine summer evening the table would be set out in the garden under the plum tree, and the family would dine there. Then Marius Roux, Duranty and Alexis would come, and "with the table cleared, and steaming tea served, we would lean on the table with our elbows, talking till midnight under the stars," relates Alexis. "Sometimes Zola would have finished a chapter of *La Fortune des Rougon* (the first of his series), and read from it; it was all about our far off southern town of Aix, under the name of 'Plassans.' " There, in the provinces, the echoes of Napoleon's coup d'état stirred this avaricious family to ruse and bloodshed. Insurgents marched the country roads, chanting the "*Marseillaise*" in the dark night. The Rougons scrambled for power amid the upheaval of things, leaping into the saddle with the new despotism. One nobler member of this vast family died against a wall as a rebel . . . There was a large movement in this first novel, and truly a "deep breath." It was firmly organized, and there was the sharp relief of nobility and foulness side by side. Here in Paris, in Zola's garden, Alexis, warm, curious and sin-

gular soul, was transported on the summer evening, and be came the first and drollest of Zolaïsts . . . "During th pauses, as he turned the pages," Alexis writes, "we would hea the deep and distant murmur of Paris below us; the mysteriou snoring of a colossus falling asleep."

CHAPTER VIII

WAR AND PEACE

In the long summer evenings of 1870 the skies were flushed with strange lights. The low-lying clouds which furled thickly above Paris turned blood-red (as is not infrequently the case), and in the tense silence with which the capital attended developments there were many to say that their hue seemed catastrophal. Paris, the old city of grimy streets which bore the prevailing stench of urine, now made new by Haussmann, crowned with gleaming palaces and gay bridges and a hundred thousand gas-lights, waited for its ablution of blood and powder.

In the palace of the Tuileries, the motley ruling clique, despising Louis Napoleon already, worked upon the Empress and committed the nation to an insane foreign policy which allowed Bismarck to maneuver them irresistibly into conflict with the new giant of Europe.

Abandoning itself to stale and frivolous excesses, the public of the boulevards flocked to its favorite theaters, and worshiped the most vulgar queens and kings of the green-room.

Ever more venturesome in its license, this theater which had already gone far beyond mere exhibition, caused a young journalist who bore an extraordinary public conscience to exclaim in indignation:

"Ah! *Misère!* When the brilliant idea occurs to some wom to play the part of a ———, *au naturel,* Paris will f sick with enthusiasm. But what else can one expect? We ha grown up amid shame; the bastard progeny of an accurs race. . . ."

An accumulation of small reverses made this a hard ti for the Zolas. In spite of glittering prospects and well organiz plans, the failure of *Le Siècle* (a sort of "wine and democrac newspaper), to begin serial publication of *La Fortune des Rougo* the financial embarrassment of Lacroix—all conspired to thwa the novelist and throw him into need. For weeks Zola cou hardly write at all, and he had been forced again to distastef newspaper commissions. The radical tone of *La Fortune d Rougon* obviously had made the editors of *Le Siècle* hesita Impatient, Zola had turned to his second novel, *La Curée,* of whi the first long and showy chapter fascinated him with its pictu of Second Empire elegance. How he planned to make this bo public without arriving in an Imperial dungeon is a puzzle whi speaks much for his nerve. He hated the Empire, to be sur he was an ardent republican, for whom the passions and conv tions of '89 and '93 were close and familiar. Was he coquetti for the public martyrization of a Hugo? It was as if he long not only for controversy or for action in response to his bool but for blows.

Then finally in May, 1870, *La Fortune des Rougon* began appear in *Le Siècle,* and things looked brighter for the mome Zola had completed the concluding chapter and continued gather material for *La Curée* during the summer months. described its substance in a letter to Louis Ulbach, editor of *Cloche,* in negotiating for its serialization. This Ulbach was t same man who had charged him with writing "putrid literature

"I study the rapid fortunes born of the *coup d'état,* the frig ful financial panic which followed, appetites abandoned to ple ure, social scandals . . . I hope quite naïvely for a success, f

am working over this book with love, and trying to give it an treme exactness and striking relief . . ."

It was at this time that the government, uneasy at the wide-read attacks in the press, began to buy off journalists. Ville-essant had been given 10,000 francs for dropping the noisy chefort from the *Figaro*. Emile de Girardin, another publisher, s promised a senatorship; and 1,250,000 francs were spent pro-government papers like *Le Peuple Français* and *Le blic* during one year. Needy as Zola was, it appears that no e cared to approach him. I speak of this question here, because a calumnious reference which appears in the Goncourt *Journal*, der the date of January 25, 1875:

"At dinner, apropos of Zola, whose name I mentioned (Gon-rt even after the Empire dined with the Princess Mathilde) and o is denounced as a revolutionist, I could not help crying out:

"But it was the fault of the Empire. Zola was penniless. He l a mother and a wife to feed. He had no political opinions in first place. You could have had him like so many others if had wanted. He was unable to place his copy except in the olutionary press. It is quite natural . . . Ah! princess, you do know what service you have done for the Tuileries, how many reds your salon disarmed, what a buffer you have been between government and those who wielded the pen . . . Why Flaubert I, you bought us, so to speak, with your grace, your attention, r friendship; else we should have both been enemies of the peror and the Empress."

This item like so many bits in the nine volumes of the *Jour-des Goncourts* has caused black blood. Recalling the previous gment from Zola's conversation: "The Empire does not recog-its men of talent. . . . throws its poor men into the arms e opposition," it carries an air of plausibility.

In reality it is not as vicious as it seems. Edmond de Goncourt not see Zola being actually bribed, any more than he and

Flaubert. It was simply that he did not know his man. De Goncourt was typically French and an *aristo* as they said of him. In the salon, that marvelous institution where implacable opponents who could not be bargained with over the table, were *besieged, surrounded*, softened, with sentiment, gallantry, caresses, he found a force that *he* could only yield to. But Zola, the bear—I have spoken of what a poor figure he cut in the salon—evoked few caresses. It made his path harder and angrier. No, he was too romantic, and at bottom, too serious, too inflexible. You could only have come to him with a straight bribe—and been flung down the stairs. He had few principles about what means he used to thrust his name forward; but even the men who hated him and turned from him, admitted that he was *un brave homme*. What a miserable thwarted wretch he would have been to himself, bought, gagged, with nothing to bite into!

To add to his woes at this time, the health of his wife began to decline, and a doctor advised that he go south with her to the dry warm climate of Provence.

Suddenly the war broke out late in July, 1870. The Emperor hurried to the front on the 18th; there was a wave of chauvinism and military frenzy, only to be engulfed in silence, and gloom, as the French armies marched back and forth in the course of their futile and bewildered maneuvers of six weeks. The news of the first reverses at Froeschwiller and Wissembourg, where French forces were trapped and massacred, caused a clamor of rage and revulsion. Paris waited in a dead suspense, without news, while the two enemy armies concentrated on Sédan.

Life went on as usual in Paris. Zola visited Goncourt on August 27, 1870, and talked freely about his plans for the cycle of novels, as if nothing uncommon were happening. There was no belief in such a sheer disaster as was preparing itself at Sédan. The war at first touched Emile Zola but little. He felt disgust at the whole proceeding.

"So many imbeciles killing each other off," he exclaimed contemptuously. Having a dependent mother and wife, an only son, he was not called to serve. War as yet was a vast chess-game compared to that of the twentieth century; and Zola failed to see the object or the utility of this particular game.

In the south with his family, Zola settled in a little village between Marseilles and Aix, called Septêmes. There he soon learned that the army of MacMahon had been defeated at Sédan, that the republic had been proclaimed the next day in Paris, and that the capital was completely invested by the Germans and cut off from his reach.

He was joined from time to time by Marius Roux and Antony Valabrègue, old friends. A period of the utmost confusion set in. Even this intensely purposeful young man was forced by want and anxiety to cease his work, and drift with the tide until the "bad days" were over, but the days became so bad, and the tide became such a torrent that Zola could scarcely recognize the person he was becoming in the midst of the great upheaval.

In a letter to Marius Roux, September 19, 1870 (unpublished) he proposes that they found a newspaper in Marseilles, together with M. Arnaud, who had formerly printed his pot-boiler, "The Mysteries of Marseilles," four years ago. "In this way we may employ our time usefully. . . ."

They issued a newspaper of strong republican tinge which they called the *Marseillaise*, and sold for a penny. Those were tumultuous days in Marseilles. The people of the Midi knew of no Federal authority to look to. The Bonaparte administration had fallen there with the general *chute*, and a M. Gent had become prefect of Marseilles, representing "order" and republicanism. The *Ligue du Midi* had been formed in favor of "disorder," perhaps, and of separation, probably. Zola arriving with this new newspaper on November 2, 1870 was regarded as "Gent's man," and coming from Paris as he did, seems to have been highly unpopular with the local folk and their singular

aspirations of the moment. Beyond this, his penny newspaper was greatly disliked by the older and more expensive ones in the field. There was trouble with the typographers; it was impossible to make ends meet, and the opposition showed signs of growing violent.

In the first week of December, after a month of unequal struggle, Zola learned that Gambetta who had flown out of Paris in a balloon was forming a government in Bordeaux. He decamped, and traveled to Bordeaux to seek his fortune there.

"Marseilles is *finished*," he wrote to Roux. "It was time to get out of the country, if we did not wish to find ourselves in an embarrassing position."

In the confusion of the hour, he hoped like one of his Rougons or Macquarts to seize some strategic political position for himself. In Bordeaux, whither he had gone without his family, he met Glais-Bizoin, the former editor of *La Tribune* in Paris.

"For my part," Zola recalled later, "I thought it was the end of the world and that there would be no more literature. I had brought the manuscript of the first chapter of *La Curée* with me, and occasionally looked at it, as I might have looked at some very old documents that were souvenirs of old times. Paris seemed very distant, lost in the clouds. And as I had my mother and wife to look after, and no certain prospects of money, I ended by thinking it quite natural and advisable that I should plunge into politics, for which I had previously felt so much contempt, a contempt which soon returned."

Glais-Bizoin was a colorful old Celt, "short, lean, a septagenarian, with a nose like a hawk, and a glistening cranium," not to speak of an irresponsible sense of humor. He was now a colleague of Gambetta and the other Republican leaders.

"What, you, Zola!" he cried. "You are not in Paris! How did you get out?"

"I have just arrived from Marseilles," said Zola.

"Why didn't you come to Tours? We needed all the men we could get."

All the members of the staff of *La Tribune* including even the office-boy, were now in the government.

Zola related his adventures in Marseilles, and explained his poverty and quest of work.

"But my dear fellow," exclaimed Glais-Bizoin, "We are going to give you a prefecture! You were on *La Tribune*. That is enough!"

But no prefecture materialized, and Zola, impatient, revealed to the government pro tem that his heart was set on having the sub-prefecture of Aix, his native town. "The citizens of Aix want nothing better than to have me there." (This was scarcely exact!) The present sub-prefect, M. Martin, was undesirable, he claimed, and Prefect Gent in Marseilles would really like to dismiss him and place Zola in his stead. He despatched letters and telegrams to Marius Roux in Marseilles to keep him posted and aid him. Nothing developed of it.

There was talk of a place in Auch, then in Bayonne.

In the meantime, Glais-Bizoin made Zola his personal secretary, and Zola attended to routine matters and witnessed Chamber meetings with him. It was a droll life for him.

He wrote to Marius Roux.

"Bordeaux, 22 December, 1870.

"My dear Roux,

"I have agreed to be secretary to Glais-Bizoin. It is a position which will permit me to study the people here, and get out of them what I would like best. Here, at the Café de Bordeaux, and on the sidewalk by the Comédie, one would think oneself on the boulevard des Italiens. I have recognized some acquaintances here and there. It is a good thing to show yourself here . . . This is the road to Paris . . . With a little dexterity, we can make a triumphal re-entry."

Three days later, he writes:

"I am getting to be very slick . . . They offered me the post at Quimperlé, because they knew I would refuse it. I see that I have done well to accept this place (as secretary) because I am in on all the secrets of the comedy . . ."

Then he refers strangely to the Marseilles affair: "Let Arnaud alone. *Do not hide either my departure, nor my new position. I do not wish to look as if I took flight after the failure of the 'Marseillaise!'* "

Zola had his mother and wife join him now in Bordeaux.

In a letter to Valabrègue, of January 7, 1871, he refers to another curious scrape. Enemies had tried to make things hot for him, before he left!

"I have learned a runny thing. They almost went to Aix, to arrest me as a rebel. That is stupendous . . . They mustn't make us too disgusted with the people. I have fought for them in the newspapers of Paris. But if I ever have any power, I shall make the envious and the cowardly feel me!"

Finally Zola was really appointed sub-prefect of the small town of Castel-Sarrasin. And out of this a most diverting comedy arose.

Down in this corner of Gascony, the presiding functionary was also a young man of letters, a poet in fact, Camille Delthil, author of *Rustiques* and *Lambrusques*. This literary sub-prefect, who had been long resigned to a life of mild politics and lettered leisure was consternated when Clément-Laurier, Director of Personnel in the Cabinet, sent Zola to supplant him.

Camille Delthil relates the incident himself:

"Early in February, 1871, on the eve of the general elections, I received one fine day, a despatch from the Government of National Defense at Bordeaux which removed me to other functions and named in my place the future author of *Nana* and *L'Assommoir*. Very astonished by such an order, unjustified by

my views, my conduct or connections, I rushed to Bordeaux to see Gambetta himself." (He was unwilling, in fact, to believe in the Zola menace, feeling that as long as there was a Castel-Sarrasin, he, Camille Delthil, native and bard of the region should rule over it . . .) "Gambetta refused to explain, in fact knew nothing about the matter. I insisted. Laurier, I learned, had done it on his own initiative. Gambetta learning of the whole matter, seemed highly displeased. In the end, I returned to my post, and the proposal was dropped."

Zola had gone to the office of the sub-prefect, remonstrated and fulminated in his awkward way and returned to Bordeaux with the matter still pending.

In the meantime, the long and cruel siege of Paris was over, negotiations for peace were under way and the Government packed up and moved to Versailles on its way to Paris. Zola, seeing a chance to keep his finger in, in the capital, followed with his family, and formally resigned the post at Castel-Sarrasin. He was in the state of mind of one of his *Rougon-Macquart*. Uprooted, derailed, he followed the trail with ferocity, bent on seizing a strategic post for himself. Politics . . . "for which I had felt so much contempt" was the stage of action in the time of national disaster. No one read any books now, no one published them. Who knew when there would ever be literature again? As for his magnificent plans of last year, were they even real? Were those times not gone with the old Empire?

It is undeniable that Zola, the cloistered young novelist of yesterday as of the morrow, longed during this interval for a strong rôle in the national drama. Had he not been an ardent republican, a forceful and even violent publicist? He marched upon Paris intoxicated with ambition.

"The Republic has been proclaimed. A new Paris is about to be born! It is our reign that begins now!"

So he exulted in a letter to Paul Cézanne.

His old playmate, Cézanne, found that he exaggerated, that there was no republic for insurgent geniuses.

"I was far off in Estaques," (on the Mediterranean) he commented, "working on a landscape, which was not going so well. I remained some time longer finishing these things up . . ."

Cézanne, we may note, is always in extraordinary contrast to Zola. All his lust for action was consumed internally in his struggle with his art. After the recent reverses in the salons, there was now a moment of retreat for the young painters. Cézanne, Pissarro, Renoir, Monet, at one of the most fruitful periods of their lives, were off in the country working intensely and silently, scarcely hearing the echoes of calamity and war.

The gates of Paris opened; Zola resumed corresponding for *La Cloche,* which printed his daily reports on the sittings of the Government. He got into so many exciting scrapes from now on that although he had promised in the letter cited above to communicate with Cézanne in a few days, he wrote nothing for four months.

On March 18, 1871, the insurrection of the *communards* took place in Paris. The bombardment of the city by the Germans, the long siege of months with its attendant famine, had turned the population of the city into an armed and fanatical mass. The Parisians had too long subsisted on rats and decrepit horses; their morale had been maintained unnaturally by the flaming utterances of old reds like Victor Hugo who had suddenly appeared in their midst out of exile. Now with the establishment of the Thiers Government in March, and the moment come to disarm the population as agreed with the Germans, they turned as if in hysterical rage upon themselves and burst into insurrection. The disastrous war of 1870 now was succeeded by a frightful anticlimax of blood and crowd madness. The government soldiers in the city were disarmed and fraternized with. In the workers' sections, the Montmartre, Belleville, Gobelins, full revolt was in force; the days of '89 were reënacted. There were

wild demonstrations. Women dressed in black mounted on monuments in public places and chanted funeral hymns. Hostages were taken and killed.

In the midst of this, the near-sighted Zola, note-book in hand, passing back and forth through the city, scarcely realizing how serious the disorders had become, was arrested by the *communards* as a suspect. Glais-Bizoin, his chief, had been arrested on the same day, and led to the Hôtel de Ville. Zola was led to the police station by guards.

". . . But I am Emile Zola, an old Republican! My books have been condemned by the Empire. I am a journalist . . ." Protesting and vociferating his innocence, he managed to extricate himself.

In *La Cloche* of March 22, 1871 (the following day) he refers to "an incident, which I do not wish to relate, having prevented me from going to Versailles," making it impossible to report the chamber meeting of that day.

Issuing from the city, the next day, he was arrested again, but this time by Government troops under the orders of a commissary. He was again in a position to be accorded rough treatment, when Gustave Simon, son of the statesman, Jules Simon, passed by and had him released.

In a letter many years later Zola wrote to Gustave Simon, "I owed you my life!"

His own correspondence in *La Cloche* the next day describes his situation exactly:

March, 23, 1871: "Again I nearly missed the sitting today. This time I had gone to Versailles, but at the exit from the station, a commissary decided to take me for a 'dangerous' person . . .

"Harassed by the *Comité Central* yesterday, suspected today by the executive power, I examine my conscience and wonder whether it would not be the better part of wisdom to pack up my trunk and leave . . . The only thing that consoles me is that there is no third government existing which can arrest me tomorrow."

Zola had nevertheless installed himself in his home in the Batignolles, rue de la Condamine, when the civil struggle between the *communards* and the government forces became earnest and bloody, the two factions fighting with far less mercy than had been given by the Germans, who now waited outside and looked upon this scene in bewilderment. The gates were shut and Paris was engulfed in a new siege, a far bloodier one, which raged for ten weeks more. Zola found his movements greatly hampered. The national troops hammered at the walls of the city. Shells fell in his garden, the uproar outside made it impossible to think. . . . The national troops made a breach in the wall of the city and entered on the left bank. They captured the strategic points after bitter street-fighting; then they turned their guns on the right bank, the hill of the Montmartre, the Batignolles where Zola lived.

In the blood madness which prevailed women and children would mount the barricades in the narrow streets and fight the National Guards to the death. Among the populace, Zola notes in his recollections, (*Nouveaux Contes à Ninon*) a certain indifference to slaughter and death. On a Sunday, from the high hill of the Montmartre, whence can be viewed a final scene of battle near the plain of Neuilly, the public look on laughing as they hold their picnics and eat their lunch in the grass.

"There are shots of cannon rising and then falling in the distance. 'It is all so far away,' said a pretty young blonde, 'that when a man is broken in two, it just looks like a toy soldier being bent or doubled up!' "

It is curious how Zola threads his way through this Reign of Terror without being hurt, indifferent. Often, a fat, awkward short-sighted individual stumbles and bounces so along his way through dangers to which more agile and sensitive persons succumb . . . He was deeply, deeply annoyed. It was most distressing. He was thinking about characters, about disheveled plans but he could seize upon nothing. All his efforts to play a prope

part, to make something out of this nightmare were frustrated . . . Finally word came to him that he would be seized as a hostage and probably shot. It is difficult in the confusion of the time to discover which force considered him undesirable now. The *communards* were shooting their hostages every day in cold blood; the Federal Government herded 40,000 suspects into camp and in the course of a year executed many thousands of them! At any rate Zola got himself a Prussian pass, and fled to Bonnières, well off in the country, where he waited for "the bad days" to blow over.

"Truly," he thought, "it is the end of the world. . . ." This was late in May, 1871.

For over two months, as Cézanne relates, "night and day cannon shot had been falling about Zola's head. Only he was very brave . . . When he found himself tranquilly back in his home at Batignolles, after the Communes, all these terrible things had the air of a bad dream.

" 'When I saw,' he wrote me, 'that my pavilion had not budged, that my gardens remained unchanged, that not a bench, not a piece of furniture, not a tree had suffered, I could have believed that the two sieges were the story of an undertaker invented to frighten little children . . . I am sorry all the imbeciles were not killed!' "

The whole period seems to have filled Zola with revulsion, instead of having fired his imagination. With peace declared, and the nation exhausted, he could go back to his journalism and writing again. It was to be a long time before he found the rôle of a man of action suited to his taste; when he did, in a great sequel to his career, it was, to be sure, a magnificent rôle. But now he longed only for tranquillity in his own life, in order to complete the vast work he designed. He picked up his old manuscript of *La Curée* where he had left off. He resumed observations, studies of places and characters for his book. He had no wish to consider his own life, his own narrow adventures. The

soul-shaking incidents of the past seven months left his interior self unchanged, untouched. He flung himself gratefully upon the long labors indicated for the Rougon-Macquart, oddly preserved from shipwreck, disaster. The program which this ferocious will had set for him yesterday was resumed without the slightest alteration to-day.

CHAPTER IX

THE "FOUR AUTHORS"

"I HAVE just finished your atrocious and beautiful book! I am still stunned by it. It is strong! Very strong!

"I disapprove of nothing in it save the preface. In my opinion that hurts your work, which is so impartial and so high. You give away your secret. . . . something which a novelist has no right to do.

"But you have a glorious talent, and you are a brave fellow!

"Tell me when I can come to see you so that we may talk at length about your book.

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT."

This letter reached Zola shortly after the appearance of the third of the Rougon-Macquart novels, *Le Ventre de Paris*. Unstinted praise from Flaubert! It was a thrilling moment for the young novelist whose head rang with the excitement and the exultation of his accomplishment. He knew it was a chef d'oeuvre. It had taken ten years of his life to reach the particular power of this book. With an intense and sustained effort he had distilled the substance and the form of it out of liquids that were the purest Zola. In no other book, despite the strong ones he had already written, was he so completely himself. And despite the moderate

public he had as yet, he became now a young writer of established power and genius, associated with four other famous men, Flaubert, Edmond de Goncourt, Alphonse Daudet, and Ivan Turgenieff, all big men, giants in fact, "good giants" who having much in common beside their differences knew how to regale themselves with good food as well as good wine, impassioned conversations about literature as well as "thick tales" of amorous adventures. These were great evenings, dinners, and Sunday afternoons; an ideal existence in the company of these chosen comrades, which began now for Zola, and which forms an *épopée* of the life of the nineteenth century.

To glance back over the past two years, an animated and fertile period of realization had begun after the troubled days of '71. Zola had resumed journalism, and contributed regularly to *La Cloche* (Paris), and the *Sémaphore* of Marseilles, literary studies on a great variety of themes in which he sought generally to grind his own axe.

La Fortune des Rougon had appeared hastily in book form, in September, just as *La Cloche* began to publish serially the second novel of the series, *La Curée.* Its first chapter had lain peacefully in a newspaper office all through the war and the two sieges. It had received little attention, appearing as it did at a moment when the public was more concerned with whether there was to be another king or a president in power.

The origins of the horde of *Rougon-Macquart* were traced in *La Fortune des Rougon.* Adelaïde Fouqué gives birth to Pierre Rougon, founding thus the legitimate branch, and then to Ursule and Antoine Macquart, her bastard progeny. Pierre Rougon and his wife Félicité, save "Plassans" during the upheaval of the coup d'état for the Napoleonic administration, and thus lay the rotten foundations of a great family fortune in intrigue and blood, while their son Eugène Rougon collaborates with them from Paris where he has become a confidential agent of the new government (later, its prime minister). The passion, the madness of the fam-

ily, flowers in a finer form in the person of Silvère, son of Ursule Macquart-Mouret, who becomes an insurgent and dies during the red uprisings of the Midi. This barest summary of the action, scarcely suggests what a strong overture the book formed for the *Rougon-Macquart*, upon what a large scale intrigue piled upon intrigue, greed collaborated with lust. The book is peopled with a hundred principal and minor characters, of whom a full score represent the first development of the personages who were to live in the later books; yet there is an admirable organization, a vigorous and yet deftly managed crescendo. The author suppresses quite rigorously (this is a definite characteristic of the early "firm" Zola novels) his own fancies or exclamations, relieving himself chiefly through his bent for *alto relievo*, for bold contrasts, and for deliberately violent episodes à la Eugène Sue. Above all the influence of Balzac, the Balzac of *Eugènie Grandet* and *Père Goriot* is felt. A brilliant disciple of the author of the "Human Comedy" had appeared, and the fact did not pass unperceived.

In *La Curée* (The Pack), which forms the second book, Zola moves from the provinces to scenes of the life of Paris during the coup d'état of Louis Napoleon. Aristide Rougon, alias Saccard, throws himself with the pack upon the quarry which Paris has become during the convulsions of 1851-1852. In his rapid rise, through his cold-blooded second marriage to an heiress (Renée) who is on the verge of social disaster, he arrives at the zenith of bourgeois luxury and like the others about him "wallows in the infamy which his unbridled appetites deliver him to."

Zola was writing here about a world of which he knew nothing. At the time (1871) during which he gathered material for this novel, Paris was in great confusion, and he "was put to many shifts for information he needed." It must be remembered that under the spell of Flaubert's method of documentation, which did not pale at reading twenty or thirty works on a given sub-

ject, or spending years living and studying the regions where scenes of his novel were to take place, Zola sought to assimilate all the material he could reach which touched upon his theme. It is not to be doubted that he experienced an authentic scientific rapture in finding out from a dozen carriage builders all the mechanism of the princely equipages of the time. For the mansion of Saccard, he adopted the residence of Menier the fabulous chocolate manufacturer, near the Parc Monceau. Unable to penetrate to the interior, he was compelled to employ both his imagination—sacrilege to the naturalist school!—and scholarship, which was much preferable. Ten years later, Emile Zola attended a banquet given to journalists, at the mansion which chocolate had built, and moaned to himself many times: "But if I had only seen this when I wrote *La Curée!* If I had only seen this . . .!" The bizarre and brash luxury of Saccard's house had been deemed greatly exaggerated by the critics. "But this is ten times more extravagant than the interior I described!" he exclaimed, as he adjusted his spectacles to examine closely some piece of *chinoiserie.* I am led to believe that Zola got an authentic inspiration, out of holding his notebook in one hand, and feeling, smelling, seeing the REAL THING. This is *intrinsically the frame of mind of the epoch.*

A scene from *La Curée,* Renée Saccard dining with Maxime Saccard, her step-son, in a *salon particulier* of the well-known Café Riche, had brought about the censure of the Government. Ulbach had therefore suspended publication of *La Curée* in his newspaper in agreement with Zola. It was a familiar crisis.

"Much as we differ with the views and the methods of the author," Ulbach had announced in *La Cloche,* "we believe that he is guided by a sincere faith in them, and the highest artistic purpose."

Zola's letter to the newspaper of November 8, 1871 is worth citing:

My dear Ulbach,

I was invited by the Prosecutor of the Republic to visit his office and there, was politely warned that . . . it would be prudent to cease publication of such a work (which had been greatly denounced to him), although I was free not to do so at my own risk and peril.

The situation is clear. If I were alone, I would certainly attempt the adventure, desirous of knowing what is my crime and what punishment is meted out to the conscientious writer who creates a work of art or science? But out of regard for you, I agree to deny myself this satisfaction.

I know that you are opposed to my literary methods, . . . and if out of artistic liberalism you were good enough to attempt publication of my book, I prefer to rest alone in the dock upon the occasion when my effort becomes criminal. I become proud of this crime, this book of combat.

During three years I had gathered documents, and what dominated was the foul reality, the incredible adventures of shame and folly, money stolen and women sold. This note of gold and flesh sounded so loud, that I resolved to give it. I wrote *La Curée*. Must I have been silent? Could I have left in the shade this outburst of debauchery which lights up the Second Empire?

Certainly, I must not be accused of exaggeration. I did not dare tell all! The audacity before crude facts with which I am reproached, has recoiled more than once at the documents which I possess. Must I give the names, tear off the masks, to prove that I am an historian, and not a purveyor of filth? The names are still on everyone's lips . . .

And yet I accustom myself ill to the thought that it is a Prosecutor of the *Republic*, who warned me of the danger offered by this satire of the Second Empire! Alas, they cannot accept the idea that real virtue should know how to guard itself without compulsion and has no need of gendarmes. *Allez!* a society is only strong when it throws the light of day upon the truth.

It is an excellent example of Zola the polemicist in action. Literature for him could be only a battlefield. The crusader and the evangelist are visible even in the most objective period of his art. Like his master, Balzac, he felt himself surrounded by enemies. "*La Curée* is the evil plant growing upon the dung-pile of the Empire . . . I wished to show in this new *Phèdre*, what a frightful collapse threatens when morals rot and family bonds

are dissolved . . ." Indeed, the century of Dickens, of Zola, of Tolstoy, of Ibsen, is charged with preachment . . .

"My husband loved to sermonize all his friends," Mme. Zola observed long after. "He would give them valuable advice," she added with a note of sharpness, "which I am sorry to say, he could not always avail himself of."

Catulle Mendès, son-in-law of Gautier, a poet of the Parnassian manner and publisher of the *République des Lettres* came to the rescue of Zola's suspended novel and ran it to its tragic end in his journal.

Stimulated by the controversy, by the taste of opposition, the young novelist set to work as if possessed upon the third volume of the series and—he was thirty-two!—his ninth book of prose. Nor was this all; he was devoting his spare time to turning *Thérèse Raquin* into a play, and to hackwork for the *Corsaire*, another newspaper, now that he had broken with Ulbach. In a letter to Flaubert he complains of being brutalized by hackwork. As he told Goncourt, he wrote every day from nine to half-past twelve and from three to eight. Under the high strain of this prodigious effort, his whole organism would ache for days, and, hypochondriac, he spoke of the beginning of heart trouble, of bladder trouble, of incipient rheumatism. It was rather the groaning of his nerves that he was aware of; for we know that at his end he was remarkably preserved and under another destiny could have lived to a hundred. Zola wrote methodically, according to schedule, as he himself related and, as the legends have it, became a professor of energy, scorning the romantic inspiration and trusting all to exactness of knowledge and the perfect organization of his plans. But the hours of terrible concentration, the intense nervous excitement under which he labored upon this book after his own heart, drove him weeping and moaning to his bed, tossing through long hours of insomnia "choking with a flood of ideas," with an illusion of pains throughout his body, with a fear of death coming during the night to arrest his colossal schemes.

Goncourt Journal (June 3, 1872): "Zola dined with me today. I saw him take his glass of Bordeaux in his two hands and heard him say: 'Look at the trembling of my fingers!' And he spoke of growing angina pectoris, and articulary rheumatism.

"Never have men of letters seemed born more dead than in our times, and yet never has their work been more active, more incessant. Nervous and sickly as he is, Zola works from nine in the morning to eight at night. With talent and a growing reputation—that is what he has to do in order to earn a living. 'I must do it,' he repeated. 'And don't think that I have much will. I am by nature the weakest and the most subject to distraction. Will has been supplanted in me by the fixed idea which renders me sick if I do not yield to its obsession.'

"And so part of the day, I chat with this amiable invalid, whose conversation verges, childlike, from hope to despair. 'Journalism has rendered me a service,' he says. 'It has taught me how to work. In the old days, a kind of afflux of ideas and theories would, at a certain point, choke in me and cause me to throw up my pen in despair. Now there is a regulated flow, a less abundant current, but freed of encumbrances.' "

Then, despite the laborious work Zola did for ill-paying newspapers, days of black misery set in again.

M. Lacroix, having just published *La Curée* in volume form, an event that had been attended with some interest in literary Paris, went into bankruptcy. His affairs had suffered greatly during the war, and he had long been unable to balance his accounts. It was distressing to Zola in one way, because he had wanted one publisher to carry on with his books. But it was a disaster in a much more dreadful sense.

It will be remembered that Zola's drawing against his books were in the form of notes due in three months, at 500 francs, to be renewed automatically and retired upon receipts from serial and book publication. Either through neglect or weakness, Lacroix

instead of retiring them in due order had allowed them to fall into the hands of creditors, who could not easily be convinced that Zola was not Lacroix's "man of straw." Swelled by accumulated interest and by confused book-keeping they aggregated something in the neighborhood of 20,000 francs! The Zola family was visited by marshals, menaced with court-proceedings, and all their furniture was seized.

The house in the rue de la Condamine became nude and gray with despair. Starving again with his wife and mother—they had nearly starved in a cold room at Bordeaux, during the war—there came a time when Mme. Zola, plucking out the wool of their last mattress, went to sell it in the Fleas Market in order to have bread. Unable to work at his book, unable to realize enough to feed them by hackwork, Zola moaned wretchedly: "Stupid! Stupid! How stupid it all is!" These days of banal misery threw the three people into a terribly close bond of affection. Zola's wife was simply a woman of fortitude and hope, and their love was a sturdy and long-lived thing. The hungry days, so much like those in the Latin Quarter, passed soon.

Théophile Gautier, who knew of Zola's distress, through Mendès, spoke for Zola to a young publisher, named Georges Charpentier. At the shop of this man, who had just succeeded to his father's business, a distinguished circle of littérateurs was already in the habit of gathering, for he was a person of taste and of strong and attractive character. Sitting at the Comédie Française, with Francisque Sarcey, the critic, and with Charpentier, the good Théo was talking about the new writers of the time, some of whom were even loud in their renunciations of the romantics, Gautier and Hugo.

"There is one," he said, "who is a little different from all the others. And he is having very hard luck right now. Why don't you take him in, my dear Charpentier? If I am not mistaken, the fellow has a touch of genius. His name is Emile Zola. I'll answer for him!"

Both Sarcey and Charpentier had heard of him, ever since his début in the Figaro, and they had read his *Thérèse Raquin*. Gautier's words however surprised them and left an especially strong impression on Charpentier.

The house of Charpentier (still selling bales of the "Complete Works of Alfred de Musset") had a junior partner named Maurice Dreyfous, an essayist and friend of Gautier's, who aided in the reorganization. They had in fact hoped to gain Zola, but the strong ethics of French publishing preclude approaches to the authors of another house. Now that Lacroix was down, and Zola had no publisher, Dreyfous ran around to see him, and proposed that he visit M. Charpentier.

The works of Emile Zola were not fought for at this time, despite their undeniable promise of durability. He was in fact so little popular that few newspapers would publish his books in serial form.

Dreyfous found the young novelist rather "harassed, disoriented, ill-clothed," overwhelmed with ill-paid hackwork. And in fact the proposal that he go to Charpentier, one of the strongest publishers, almost put him into ill humor. He had pursued nearly all of them with no result, recently.

"That young man," he related to his wife, "who came to see me at the newspaper office, was very nice, but I think he is a little crazy . . ."

The young man, Dreyfous, persisted, and so Zola, observing that "there was nothing to lose" went to see Charpentier. He was both timid and assured by turns. He was in fact uncomfortable about his worn, green-black suit, which had been bought by Mme. Zola in the quarter of the Temple and which she had fitted to him as well as she could.

The pretty and spirited Mme. Charpentier, who "was even lovelier and more intelligent than she appeared," effaced herself, seeing his confusion—Zola remembered it and adored her all his life—and the gruff, ill-groomed young man found himself in

conference with a younger Charpentier, instead of the old dean of the romantic period, who would have "held his books in horror."

This Charpentier assured him in fact that they wanted his books.

What were his terms?

"Well, since you ask," Zola spoke with downrightness, "I shall be frank. The conditions I demand are virtually impossible. What I need, for once, is moral repose, a secure existence, my daily bread. I have charges, my mother and wife. I need 500 francs a month in order to do my work tranquilly . . . I shall complete and hand in two novels a year for five years. Ah! I have so many ideas for novels in my head! And yet I must make all sorts of shifts, run to newspapers, do all sorts of vile jobs . . . If you only knew what hard days I have been going through! And my demands seem absurd. You see as a business matter—for I worked with Hachette three years—it is all very impractical. You could not sell serial rights to the press for my novels. They don't want them."

"That means . . ." Charpentier had said, "I must contract to give you 30,000 francs in five years. It is an important sum. You must at least give me a day to think it over."

When Zola was gone, Charpentier seemed excited. He was young, of a daring temperament, and also had large dreams.

"What a pity!" he had exclaimed, "a fellow of his stuff in such a scrape." The decision was made swiftly, somewhat enthusiastically.

The next day, Zola arrived with the suspicious air of, "what are they going to offer me in place of what I asked?"

Charpentier seized his hand at once:

"Agreed! I like you. I have confidence in you!"

Zola turned quite red with astonishment. From this moment on, he and Charpentier became great friends. The impulsive young publisher who patronized him now, was a lovable, witty, alert

fellow. His literary tastes, his standards and his enterprise were ambitious.

The terms arranged were really less liberal than those of Lacroix, for in the event of a great sale—should Zola for instance become one of the most famous authors in the world some day! —he had nothing but his 500 francs a month, in return for which Charpentier possessed all rights of serialization, translation, popular editions. However, the young publishers set determinedly to work at defending their investment; for it needed energy for Dreyfous to sell Zola's next novel to the press, and the writer's monetary value was so low, that several thousand unsold copies of the two previous novels in the *Rougon-Macquart* series were bought for a few sous apiece. Zola's books sold slowly for some years, seldom above three to four thousand copies, and he fell steadily behind his promised schedule of two novels a year. His publishers worked manfully not to lose on him, as he had assured them they would. There were no others, in reality, who would have offered him the modest security through which he could absorb himself wholly in his Rougons and Macquarts.

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In an access of joy, he had fallen to work with renewed enthusiasm. Every month he drew his wage, and one day Dreyfous accompanying him, perceived where the money went—for Zola still seemed needy. He would stop at a lawyer's nearby, and pay something down regularly on the Lacroix notes, still legally pressed against him; then he would stop at another office and pay off something on ancient and scattered debts of his father! He never spoke of these matters to a soul. He was gratefully occupied, almost to the point of being unconscious of what was going on about him.

Tenaciously, plowing the deep furrow of the *Rougon-Macquart*, he had nevertheless begun to spread himself, firing shots in the press here and there, pressing his way into the theater,

which was his eternal temptation and the ungrateful object of his longing. He sweated, he strove. Prosperity gradually entered his household again. His daily four pages written, he would go out into his little garden, water its sparse grass with his own hands, and tend to its four geraniums.

"I can still see him, dressed in a worn sweater and old velveteen trousers, covered with dirt, and wielding the pruning-shears with which he trimmed his shrub," recalls Alexis, the bizarre Boswell of his early years. "Or with his saw and his hammer constructing a kennel for his dog, 'Mathew,' or a cage for his rabbits."

It was at this period that he had conceived the idea of writing a novel whose setting would be Les Halles, the great central food markets of Paris over which covered steel and glass sheds had been erected during the "reign" of Baron Haussmann. This enormous structure, so typical of the new organization, the traffic, the uproar of modern life moved him deeply as a subject, much as the mediaeval Nôtre Dame had moved Victor Hugo. One might even say that it was "his Nôtre Dame." This odd corner of the Parisian world, for him a marvelous "still life," is the battleground of the market-women or *dames des Halles*, who form a corporation of their own, and jealously guard their customs and privileges, and even their particular language. Then there are the city officials who exercise surveillance over them, and are at constant warfare with them; the market porters or "strong men" of Les Halles, men of huge strength whose mushroom-shaped hats and flour-dusty blouses give a particular character to French markets. Then under the immense pavilions, there are the gleaners, the outcasts, the bohemians who frequent the markets for shelter or for theft.

A materialist, it was typical of Zola to seek some striking external effect for his book. Often at this time, issuing with Alexis from the office of *Le Siècle*, he would exclaim, "What a great book there is to be written about this monster monument!" He would drag Alexis or Cézanne along with him, and they would wander

at noon through the almost deserted pavilions, exploring the cellars, the galleries and even the roofs. One day from a certain part of the rue Montmartre, at sunset, he exclaimed suddenly: "Turn around and look, Alexis!" The pavilions seemed Babylonian palaces rising one above another.

He came during rain, snow, in the morning or at night, when the great trains of food carts marched in, when Les Halles teemed and shouted with life.

In his passion for systems, Zola had already gone farther than Flaubert—farther, I say, without striking the ephemeral and ineffable. He would take out of the immense family of *Rougon-Macquart* one or more characters, reflect upon their nature and place them in a particular setting—Les Halles let us say. Then he would study the people with whom his character would come into contact in such a class, "the places he would inhabit, the air he would breathe, his daily life, down to the most trivial occupation."

Notebook in hand, he would proceed to frequent the milieu he had chosen, often to his own great discomfort and danger—the tradespeople of Les Halles for instance treated him with great rudeness, thinking that he was spying out business secrets. After some months, he felt that he had absorbed this kind of life, knew its language, the kinds of episodes which took place there, that he was able, in short, to transmit its peculiar perfume or genius.

Zola would approach a brawny looking fishwoman.

"Madam, can you tell me where you throw your rotten fish?"

"What's that?"

"What do you do with your fish when you wish to discard it?"

"How does that concern you?" was the sharp reply.

He explained that he was making studies for a newspaper article.

"Look here." She indicates a vent in the ground behind her counter. Below, are the sewers, a veritable sea flowing underneath Les Halles.

An undesirable individual could be thrown down one of these ventholes and completely lost sight of, Zola notes in his copy-book. He ventures into galleries, veritable catacombs under the streets where live poultry is stored, and is expelled angrily.

He studies a beautiful new butchershop, nearby, a mountain of carrots here, of strawberries there. Eventually his material has been gathered in sufficient detail, and he proceeds to the alignment of a few simple forces, shocks and resistances, as noted in his general plans. He writes systematically, a thousand words a day, with an intense effort of organization, his plans and his notes in extreme detail always before him. Thus is born the flamboyant, bizarre, Rabelaisian, *Ventre de Paris* ("Belly of Paris"), an Iliad of modern city life, a poem of plenty and of hunger, animality and idealism.

Zola abandons himself in this book. He dwells with love over the abundant contours of Lisa Macquart, "the fair butcher-lady." Her husband who has become fat, looks not unlike those animals whose lard he is perpetually laboring over. There is a carnality, a lustfulness with which these people caress the flesh of the animals they slaughter or sell, the sausages, the fish. Each has his odor, one of red meat, one of fish, another of cheese. All of them gorge themselves, and fatten in their contented animality.

But Florent, the unjustly exiled, with his long hungry face, and his spare black figure, is of another world, a dreamer, with small appetite, and, to the people of Les Halles it seemed, with perdition in his heart.

"Do you know the battle of the Fat and the Thin?" asks Claude Lantier, the painter, of Florent. There was the whole human drama; all men were classed as Thin or Fat for him: two hostile groups, of which one devoured the other. "Cain was Fat, and Abel Thin. Since the first murder, it has been a continual feast, the great hungry ones have sucked the blood of the small eaters . . . The stronger of the weaker . . . Beware, my friend, beware of the Fat."

Florent, is in fact, delivered up eventually to the fury of the mob of the Fat. The flurry subsides, and the Fat go on peacefully consuming their daily flesh.

A grotesque and baroque book, *Le Ventre de Paris* has remained the most perfectly characteristic of Zola's early career. Its undertones of hunger and rage evoke the youth of the Latin Quarter with the still meager silhouette, making his painful way through the indifferent Paris which he menaced . . .

Now Zola too was becoming one of the Fat; life ran smoothly by. He feasted gluttonishly on good things, on rare dishes. His books issued from him with an even tenor—but was it a false obesity? Underneath was there still the thin, hungry rebel smouldering, ready to flare up again?

The author of *Le Ventre de Paris* became proverbial. The rudeness, the extravagance, the extremely particular sensuality of it brought a certain notoriety. By the group who were associated with Flaubert, whose ruling passion it was to *embêter les bourgeois,* the work was embraced both with hilarity and with genuine admiration, as in the letter of Flaubert above. With an esprit de corps that is characteristic of such circles Zola was warmly welcomed in their midst as an excellent character . . .

A young poet whose literature had been thus far concerned only with antique Greece, by name Anatole France, flayed *Le Ventre de Paris* in the *Temps,* terming it "vain, empty, detestable virtuosity," which had no place in the realistic school. Louis Ulbach, an old enemy, attacked it as "obscene," once more . . . Little known by the Boulevard public, Zola acquired quickly the legend of being "a rude fellow . . . a revolutionary . . . a drinker of blood" every morning for breakfast, one who delivered himself to orgies of eating and concupiscence!

Replying to Ulbach, Zola held himself back "from flying into a rage . . . I shall see you to-morrow so that you may treat me as one escaped from lupanars," he writes. "You know that I indulge only in orgies, that I alone scandalize my age through my

disordered life. It is only I who am seen in places of debauchery . . . Ah, you should not have written that, knowing me, and aware that I am more highly moral than the whole clique of imbeciles and fops who assail me!"

The theater in Paris exercises an unfailing fascination on French writers. Here the Parisian public is met face to face; here one feels the thrill of reading the tangible effect of one's lines. Tradition, at this time, had made the playhouse the road to the Academy as well as to enormous gain. The greatest of literary battles, those of Racine and Hugo, had been fought before the foot-lights. Zola dreamed of a naturalist drama, of transporting his labors to the stage, with its vivid glory. *Thérèse Raquin* dramatized, found a Parisian theater, but was greeted with boohs and hisses. The newspaper critics, Paul de Saint-Victor (a demi-god at this time), and Francisque Sarcey raked it as well.

"This fellow, Zola, makes me a little sick," Sarcey had complained as he departed from the hall, where a somber and stifling tragedy had been enacted.

The play was dropped after five or six days. Zola acquired the familiar conviction that the critics were his enemies, that if not for them the public would have come. But then, in the age of Scribe, Sardou and Dumasfils, it needed a particular adjustment to provide the form which the theater public expected. Balzac had failed in the theater; so had Flaubert, Goncourt, Daudet. Apparently a novelist had to undo himself to succeed here. Yet Zola tried again, and in the following spring 1874 had completed a naturalistic drama, specifically conceived for the theater, *Les Héritiers Rabourdin.*

It is of considerable historical interest, since it is admitted now that Zola's efforts to reach the stage stimulated and shook up the theater of his time, and form the original if crude source of the modern French drama of Brieux, Becque, Hervieu, Henri

Bernstein, Bataille, which covers nearly forty years of our time.

With an optimism that formed a curious contrast to the tone of his books, Zola had labored over the details of this theatrical project. He had found at last the director of the small Cluny Theater in the Latin Quarter, Camille Weinschenk, receptive, and worked with him over the cast.

"Ah, what pains!" he wrote Flaubert, "for a paltry result. The worst of all is to give battle under such conditions; every afternoon from one to four o'clock, I sit there biting my fingers. One dreams of creating something original, and it all ends in perfect vaudeville."

On the evening of the première of *Les Héritiers Rabourdin*, Zola had brought his friends; the Cluny was full, Zola even maintains in another message to Flaubert that the hall was loud with laughter. But the critics—oh the critics!

"What exasperates me most is that the play has within it the possibilities of a run of a hundred nights. And yet I shall not be played twenty times; the critics triumph, I repeat, that is my only sorrow."

The *Temps*, the next day, had termed this tragi-comedy of middle class life, "dull, repulsive and immoral." The play was withdrawn after seventeen representations. Again and again Zola fought vainly to triumph on the stage. Whenever his plays appeared, the same critics who had attacked his books always made him "a great *novelist* gone astray . . . like Balzac." On the morrow of the première, Flaubert had written him, he would be, for the press, the "greatest *novelist* of the day."

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Gustave Flaubert was a rotund giant in physique, with a receding mane of blond hair and great drooping yellow moustaches. His coloring, his rosy cheeks and his pale blue eyes of a child suggested forcibly the Viking stock of Normandy. He was in fact

proud of his lineage. Touchingly romantic, despite his contempt for the ways of the bourgeois, he would climb into his evening clothes, dolorously, yet manifesting ingenuous pleasure over his flowered silk vest, his shining hat, his great red cape, and sweep grandly out to some soirée or even a reception at the Imperial Court, at which he occasionally sparkled . . .

During fifteen years of the Empire, Flaubert had lived and held forth at his apartment on the Boulevard du Temple, near the fashionable Parc Monçeau. Now he lived in the rue Murillo, a few steps from the rue de la Condamine, in a place which he left half-furnished save for the white and gold drawing room, which on Sundays held from twenty to thirty visitors who all stood drinking and smoking. "The drawn persiennes, which shut out the bright summer afternoons, and the fog of tobacco smoke, created an amiable dusk in which masters and novices were equalized." The talk was Rabelaisian and Villonesque, punctuated by the resounding laughter of the "good giant" Flaubert.

"My first visits to Flaubert," Zola relates, "were a great disillusionment, almost a suffering. I came with a whole Flaubert built up in my head after his works, a Flaubert who was the pioneer of the century, the painter and philosopher of our new world . . . And in reality I fell upon a terrible spark with a paradoxical turn of mind, an impenitent romantic who stunned me for hours under a deluge of stupendous theories. That evening I returned home, sick, crushed, bewildered, telling myself that the man in Flaubert was inferior to the writer.

"Later I reversed this judgment. I had tasted the delights of a temperament full of contradictions; I became accustomed to him, and for nothing in the world would I have changed my Flaubert."

Flaubert frightened Zola by becoming furious when he complimented him on *Madame Bovary*, and thundering: "*Merdes! Merdes!*

"I tell you, I only wrote it to upset the 'realists,' Champfleury

and his crowd—to show them that you could picture modern life exactly and be a great stylist at the same time!"

All his theories were opposed to the ideas which younger writers had derived from *Madame Bovary*.

"There is nothing modern! There are no modern subjects!" he would bellow. "Homer is as modern as Balzac!"

"If you said as *human* as Balzac, I would understand you," Zola would exclaim. He would take a work of history and try to show that schools of writers, movements arose which followed the curve of morals, of social conditons, rising and falling with epochs.

Flaubert, whom one could scarcely reason with, would cry out strong words, and many a "*Je m'en fous!*" Social conditions had nothing to do with literature; we must create great styles, that was all.

Zola, with his longing for order, for logic, for a chain of determined causes and effects, was chagrined when Flaubert would howl at the modern age, curse the railroads, the newspapers, democracy, and bewail the "good old days," the lost times of the Empire. Together with Edmond de Goncourt, he would not cease to recall the splendor of the '50s and '60s. Both of them found the Republic unbearable; they had both been guests of the court, favorites of the Princess Mathilde.

Turgenieff, the close friend of Flaubert, was also part of the group. Tall, with beautiful hair, a teller of fascinating stories, a great wit, virtually a converted Frenchman, he nevertheless bore a melancholy, an elusive temperament which baffled his friends. Alphonse Daudet, a fellow Provençal from Marseilles, who had made his debut at the same time as Zola and whom Zola had met at the *Figaro* years before, was now one of their company. While Flaubert "underwent the melancholy of past successes and tasted to the extreme the reproaches of the critics and the crowd, and while Goncourt seemed tired by a great effort through which a whole generation would profit," Daudet was the popular novelist

of the hour, the "Dickens of France." He found himself the only one whose books had a wide sale.

Each Sunday, at Flaubert's, the others would ask him:

"What is new? Any new editions? What are you going to do now?"

He would indicate that *Fromont Jeune et Risler Aîné* had passed forty-thousand, "almost ashamed of my successes," as he recalls—although one doubts it.

"Ah!" Zola would exclaim. "We shall never sell our books!" —without envy, but with a little sadness.

Daudet could be a charming fellow; he had an inimitable way of telling thick stories and even of imitating people. But he was *un fourbe,* in reality, a fake "good fellow." Posing the glad hand and a jovial, devil-may-care exterior, he was really excessively vain and envious. He and Goncourt enjoyed little jokes about Zola, whose force they envied a little, while mocking at his naïveté and his crudeness.

Goncourt was a dilletante, a collector of *chinoiseries* and objects of art, of exquisite taste, but of "cross-eyed" character. He would return from hours with Zola and Flaubert to write those pointed, fleeting notes on them in his vast "Journal of My Literary Life," notes which have a brilliant *flair* for the external effect, for the atmosphere or manner of a situation or person, while guarding all the prejudices and passions of the heated moment. Feminine and selfish in character, he was scheming to devote his fortune to the perpetuation of his glory by founding an "Académie Goncourt," and he was in turn making his friends the members of it, or crossing out their names from his prodigious testament, in accordance with his feeling for them at the moment.

When Zola's *Conquête de Plassans* appeared and reached his desk, he entered in his journal the following:

"I threw the *Conquête de Plassans* in a corner, hating to see it

on my table. With its jolly yellow cover and its smell of newness it seemed to say 'And you? Well, are you all through?' "

As for Flaubert, when this brilliantly executed novel reached him, he wrote swiftly to his young friend:

"*You may sleep on both ears.* Be assured, it is a masterpiece . . . My solid friend! . . ."

So long as Flaubert lived and fathered these re-unions there could be no visible jealousy, no intrigues, no disputes other than theoretical ones. There was much that was not pleasing to his temper in this new figure; his restless ambition which sought to externalize itself in the press or through launching a "school," a "movement"; the theorist, who sought to classify everyone; the positivistic believer in democracy, in progress, in the twentieth century . . . But Flaubert was good; there was a profound sweetness under his impetuous temper, a *bonhomie*, that softened the harshness in the others. Receiving them warmly after long intervals of solitude and fanatical labor, in his extravagant Turkish costume, he would kiss his friends when they departed.

The relationship of the four novelists has been exactly summed up by their common publisher. Goncourt, says Maurice Dreyfous, was pathologically preoccupied with the glory of Goncourt; his *Journal*, which so belittles his colleagues, is a "veritable mine of facts—each one of which will bear investigation . . ." And Daudet was rather "excessively tactful" than profoundly amiable. He had the proper nuance of deference toward Flaubert, who did not exact it, and toward Goncourt, who did—all this without too great appearance of effort. And Zola in his extremely timid nature remained on terms more correct than cordial with Edmond de Goncourt, their friendship wanting completely the ease, the abandon of a personal and literary association.

But with Gustave Flaubert, Zola was different! The famous novelist assumed naturally the air of an elder brother, and Emile Zola accorded him respect, no, tenderness, with complete forgetfulness of himself, without the least flattery. Involuntarily, he re-

vealed to the older man through a thousand acts, with what joy he walked beside him. Both at bottom had a naïveté, a personal "innocence" which belied the complexity of their art. "I have never seen two men show such sincere, such unselfish esteem for each other's talent," exclaims Dreyfous in his memoirs. And as for Zola's character, which from now on becomes fearfully distorted in the public mind, "he never spoke of the work he had done; only of his plans for new work." He had faith in himself, a strong conviction of his value, and so when he defended his ideas in the press he created unhappily a legend of his "overweening pride." Paradoxically, the closer, the more intimately one approached him, the more modest, the humbler he seemed.

Flaubert soon set aside Sunday solely for his three friends and to Turgenieff, who really was a notable "fifth" author—although little known in France at the time because his novels were in a foreign language. Zola took great pride in these intimate gatherings. He never missed a Sunday at Flaubert's for many years. Such association with four of his most gifted contemporaries was an invisible decoration; they formed an Academy in miniature . . .

Perhaps it would not be too much to say that Zola's mind was in love with Flaubert and practiced an amiable intercourse for a decade, whose fated termination was an inconsolable loss.

Through the intercession of Flaubert's great friend, Ivan Turgenieff, a fine commission had fallen into Zola's hands in 1874, that of being literary correspondent for a great Russian newspaper, the *Vyestnik Yevropi* (Messenger of Europe). It paid him very handsomely; and, still clinging cannily to his Parisian and Marseilles connections, he became really prosperous now, moved to larger quarters at 21 rue St. Georges, and began to fatten out and take on weight wonderfully. He became in fact, as the Germans term it, a *Feinschmecker* in the matter of savory and exotic dishes. He sought out curious Southern concoctions that "put fire into his blood!" On Thursdays he served the fine

dinners of a gourmet to the gathering of his provincial friends, Valabrègue, Alexis, Marius Roux, Guillemet, Cézanne. He made an excellent host, joyed naïvely in having others share his culinary luxuries. He was a host whose "handshake men enjoyed feeling."

"Soon, not content with their weekly meetings," writes Alexis, "and desirous of talking in absolute intimacy, the four novelists began to dine together once a month, calling their dinner after Flaubert's suggestion, *The Dinner of the Hissed Authors*." All of them had met reverses in the theater, Goncourt maintaining even for a long time that people had fought duels over *Henriette Maréchal*, written by him and his brother ten years before. "Turgenieff always formed a part of this gathering, having sworn by all the gods that he had been hissed in St. Petersburg."

(April 14, 1874: Goncourt Journal. "Dinner at the Café Riche, with Flaubert, Turgenieff, Zola and Daudet. An evening of people of talent who esteem each other, and which we hope to make monthly during the following winters.")

"We were all gourmands," relates Alphonse Daudet. "For example, we sought out dishes from all the provinces. Flaubert had to have Normandy butter and Rouen stuffed duckling; Edmond de Goncourt, subtle and exotic individual that he was, doted on preserved ginger; Zola reveled in sea-urchins and shellfish; Turgenieff gorged himself on caviar.

"We sat down to table at 7 o'clock, and at ten we were not through. Flaubert and Zola ate ravenously in their shirt sleeves, with their cuffs rolled up, and their napkins tied around their necks. Turgenieff stretched himself out languidly on the divan. The waiter would be chased out—useless precaution, since the 'bellowing' of Flaubert could be heard throughout the house. . . . It was not easy to feed us; the restaurants of Paris ought to remember us well. We changed often. Now it was Adolphe's and Pélès, behind the Opéra; now it was a tavern at the square of the

Opéra Comique; and now it was Voisin's, whose cellar appeased all appetites and reconciled all prejudices."

At the tavern of the Opéra Comique, one night they had the good fortune to be served a miraculous and fiery *bouillabaisse,* (immense bowl of chowder, containing all varieties of sea-life, and native to the sea-port of Marseilles, homeland of Daudet and Zola). It put verve into the conversation. Zola's *Conquête de Plassans,* just published (1874), lay on the table; this firm and sharply drawn satire of life in the provinces, and clerical intrigue, had gone far to cement his reputation for the serious public as one of the four or five soundest writers of the time. His books were now beginning to sell tolerably well. Flaubert's, "Three Tales," Daudet's "Jack," Turgenieff's "Virgin Soil," all of about the same date, composed with it, a fecund and meritorious mass of literature on the table before them.

"Zola was very happy" on this evening, as Goncourt relates, "beaming over the excellent cuisine, expanding sentimentally," his collar loosened and his large face wearing a deep flush.

"Zola!" cries the mocking Goncourt. "Are you, by the way, becoming a gourmand!"

"Yes," he replied, "it is my only vice. And when there is nothing to eat in my house, I become unhappy, frightfully unhappy . . . There is only this left! . . . Nothing else exists for me now . . . Ah you do not know what my life has been like!"

And suddenly, there he was, to the consternation of his jovial comrades, with a heavily downcast visage which encompassed the whole chapter of his miseries. It was most curious how the confident expansive moods of the young novelist would suddenly verge into outbursts of melancholy and self-lamentation.

"He began to describe the worst days of his youth, the black bitterness of his daily life. He told of the insults which were addressed him, *the suspicion in which he was held and is still held,* and the *conspiracy of silence* against his works.

"Turgenieff commented in a low tone: 'It is strange. A Rus-

sian friend of mine, a man of great intelligence, always claimed to me that the Rousseau type was purely a French type, and was never found except in France.'

"Zola, who had scarcely listened to this, continued to sob, obsessed with the thought of his miseries and his great melancholy. Nothing of what he had could temper his immense ambitions; nothing could solace the rage which had come to be a part of him.

" 'But you have made splendid progress for a man who is not yet turned thirty-five!' they all cried out.

" 'Ah well! Do you want me to speak out from my heart?' he exclaimed passionately. 'You will think I am childish, but so much the worse . . . I shall never be decorated! I shall never be in the Academy! I shall never have such honors as might affirm my talent! Before the public I shall always be—*a pariah!* Yes, a pariah!' "

Dropping his head in his hands, he sobbed to himself, repeating the word "pariah" many times.

Turgenieff with a bright kindly laugh sought to relieve the embarrassed silence and to cheer the disconsolate Zola with a parable. He told of a banquet at the Russian embassy in commemoration of the freeing of the serfs.

"Count Orloff placed me 47th at the table, even *after* the bishop of the Russian church, and you know how little they think of priests. I, who while perhaps not the foremost writer in Russia, am surely, you will grant, the foremost Russian writer in Paris! . . ."

But Zola was in a mood for self-revelation, and he spoke of his daily scourge of a hundred lines, of his cloistered home life, with no distractions in the evening save a game of dominoes with his wife or the visit of his compatriots. And "in the midst of all this, he would suddenly forget himself and confess, that his great joy, above others, was to feel himself in action, to feel the domination which he exercised from his humble hole in Paris,

and he told this with the accent of a man of great powers, who has long soaked in misery."

On other and gayer evenings the company rattled through every subject in the world, as Zola remembers it, always reverting to the book or the play of the hour, or some general question or venturesome theory.

"In our talk, neither men nor things were spared. Flaubert fulminated. Turgenieff told stories of exquisite originality and savor; Goncourt pronounced judgments on one matter or another with all his shrewdness and personal manner of phraseology. Then Daudet would act his anecdotes in that charming manner of his, which made him the best of companions; while as for myself—I did not shine at all—for I am a very poor conversationalist, and only worth something when I feel a deep conviction on some subject and fly into a passion."

Goncourt mentions a prolonged and spirited discussion "of the special and contrasting attitudes which constipated and diarrhoetic people took in literature."

They would comment on everything and everybody. Taine, for instance, was one of the dominant thinkers of the age; a restless, tormented, agitated skeptic, who chewed his incertitudes.

"Permit me gentlemen," said Turgenieff in his soft voice, "to compare Taine to a hunting dog I once owned. He would chase, he would stop and point, he would do everything that a hunting dog was supposed to do marvelously well. Only he had no nose; he found nothing. I was obliged to sell him. . . ."

Or, they spoke of Love. . . .

Zola told of a perfectly complicated love affair when he was ten years old with a girl of his age, whom he would see in church on Sundays, and to win whose heart he laid the most elaborate plans. She lived in a great house, and was charmingly dressed, while he was very poor . . . At twelve or thirteen, he was defi-

nitely pubescent. The record darkens in the obscurity of asterisks * * * *

Flaubert—I had a gorgeous love affair when I was eleven. At this time my father the surgeon of the town would receive presents from the country-people, gigots and fish . . . I remember wishing "to give my heart" an expression I had often heard in connection with love. Since I had many times heard references in my home to "operations," I pictured my heart, carried by a diligence to the home of my lady, and placed neatly in a package on the buffet of the dining-room.

Turgenieff—I had been called back to Russia, and found myself in Naples with no more than five hundreds francs. There was no railroad then and it was a long and hard voyage. On my way home I stopped at Lucerne. One afternoon, I found myself looking down from the top of the bridge, with a woman, silent, elbowing me at the parapet. Down below in the lake, we could see ducks, that had a spot like an almond on their heads, floating slowly about. The evening was magnificent . . . We began to chat, then to walk and stroll. Strolling about, we entered the cemetery—Flaubert, you know the cemetery? . . . I do not remember ever having been more amorous, more excitated, more aggressive . . . The woman lay down on a large flat tombstone. . . .

Flaubert—Ah, all that! What's all that against the sheer joy of holding the hand of a beloved woman, which you press for a second against your heart as you lead her to the dinner table.

Daudet—Heavens! (nervously) that is certainly not my way . . .

Flaubert (ingenuously)—But Daudet, you know I am an old pig! . . . Why when I was a young man of twenty, and my friends used to take me to visit . . . bad places . . . I, wearing my silk hat, and smoking a cigar, would go up to the first woman we met, and . . . in full view of my companions, without removing either hat or cigar! (He explodes with colossal

laughter, his great frame shaking violently, and tears running down his ruddy cheeks.)

Daudet—Bah! You are a cynic with men, and sentimental with women.

Flaubert—Upon my honor, you are right—even with servant girls, whom I address as "little angel."

Turgenieff—I never approach a woman save with sentiments (how strange) of mingled respect, emotion, surprise at my good fortune . . . Daudet, you have not known Russian women. Too bad . . . That would have been interesting for you . . . The Russian woman—how can one define her: a mixture of simplicity, tenderness and unconscious depravity . . .

Flaubert—(his deep voice interrupting) In northern Egypt, on a night as black as coal, between low houses, where dogs howl as if they wish to devour you, you are led to a hut, no higher than a boy of sixteen . . . There, within, you find lying on the ground, a woman in a chemise, whose body is encircled with a long golden chain, a woman with flanks as cold as ice . . . Then with this woman who remains motionless in pleasure . . . one feels, you see, infinite joy, joy . . .

Goncourt—Oh come, Flaubert, old fellow, that is *literature*, all that!——

Literature! Ah yes, they return to literature. How is love to be pictured in the novel of the modern school? In the light of modern science.

"I say, that only the poetic side of it has been presented!" cries Edmond de Goncourt.

"Love is not a particular sentiment, in itself," declares Zola, who warms up to his subject, in view of documents he has been gathering for a new book. "It does not overcome people as absolutely as it is supposed to. I feel that the emotional phenomena experienced are met with, also, in outbursts of friendship, patriotism, and that the great intensity of the passion is evoked only by the perspective of copulation. . . ."

"No," Turgenieff maintained, "Love is a sentiment that has a special color of its own. Zola, you are making a grave mistake, if you don't admit that color, that qualitative element. Love produces an effect which no other sentiment gives . . . an unbearable weight in the heart . . . the eyes of the first woman one has loved seem like immaterial things . . ."

Flaubert, Zola, Daudet, Goncourt all confessed that they had never seriously fallen in love in this way, despite all tentative claims. Only the Russian had known it! All these men, notorious for their "dissections of souls," male and female,—and how redolent of Zola and Naturalism the still used phrase is—had not known love!

Flaubert—and Turgenieff like him—was a convinced and devout nihilist. There was, by the way, a decided atmosphere of anti-clericalism in this group, perhaps the one idea common to all, and part of a century's campaign, from Voltaire to Renan and Zola, waged to rid France of its "cretinization by Jesuit teachers." In Flaubert this conviction was the result of a complete negation of all beliefs, a joy in skepticism which led him to collect "documents of imbecility," all his life. Zola, on the contrary, came to his hatred of religious and social traditions through a positive belief in science. The new literature they were creating with such prolixity, the program in favor of "naturalism" which he was pursuing in the press, was all part of a fated evolution toward a clean materialism, a progress toward a broader and happier life, the pursuit of truth and knowledge.

When Zola would speak of the vast scientific and social movements which must lead to a kind of flowering of humanity in the twentieth century, Flaubert would fix his great blue eyes upon him, incredulously, and then shrug his shoulders.

"But you!" Zola would cry, "you yourself are one of the agents of this evolution! I tell you that there is something more than well-made sentences in *Madame Bovary*, and that it is by that *something more* that the work will live. Say what you will, but

it is no less true that you struck the first blow against romanticism."

Then, Flaubert, individualist to the end, in his horror of being labeled or pigeon-holed, would burst into one of his raging cholers, before which no one could argue and even Zola preferred to fall silent in the fear of a bursted blood-vessel.

"You should be too proud!" he would exclaim cryptically, in disapproval of Zola's manifestoes and prefaces in which he outlined his theories and principles.

"I remember a terrible discussion of Chateaubriand," says Zola in his portrait of Flaubert, "lasting from seven in the evening until one in the morning. Flaubert and Daudet defended him, Turgenieff and I attacking . . . The waiters looked aghast at us and fled."

No, Flaubert would never forsake his fixed ideas of beautiful sentences, such as he knew by heart from Chateaubriand and Hugo. To work over them forever in one's corner, like a monk who gives his entire life to his task, scorning life, scorning Truth, and ending by destroying himself in the growing torment over the perfection of style!

They tore to pieces all of the literature of the time. Beyle-Stendhal, who fascinated Zola (and justly), Flaubert despised and called "Mr. Beyle." Likewise he called Musset, "Mr. Musset"; only the rhetoricians existed for him.

Nevertheless, these nights and dinners were among the happiest memories of Zola's life. He would leave them trembling with the fever of ideas, in an agitated ferment that would last for days at a time. Or they would all issue together worn, and with a great world-sorrow weighing upon their breasts, Zola accompanying Flaubert through the dark streets, because of the latter's horror of going home alone to the rue Murillo. They would stop at every corner to philosophize in the morning hours in soft and then loud tones.

Flaubert at his door would kiss him on both cheeks and have

his last word: "All has been said before us, my dear friend. We have nothing left but to say the same things, only in a more beautiful form if that is possible. . . ."

ZOLA IN HIS STUDY
By Aubrey Beardsley.

CHAPTER X

THE BATTLE FOR "NATURALISM"

"Their hatred comforted him, buried him more deeply in his scorn of the human herd. . . . He alone against all of them, it was a dream which he caressed. He became intoxicated on insults; he became greater in the pride of his loneliness!"
—Zola: "Son Excellence Rougon."

NATURALISM was the term which Emile Zola seized upon and, transforming it from its traditional scientific sense, made into a war-cry for the new literature and drama.

The effort no longer passed unperceived. The *Revue des Deux Mondes*, literary organ for generations of the "Immortals" of the Academy and their neophytes—the "Immortals" of to-morrow—entered the battle of books. Ferdinand Brunetière, only in his twenties now, contributed an essay, "The Realistic Novel of Today," early in 1875, in which he took note of the current trend, and opposed to it with vigor, persuasiveness, and a certain modicum of fatuousness, the religious and social traditions of the past and the pursuit of Virtue in literature.

"Zola expounds . . . the idea of a modern art, entirely experimental and materialistic," he wrote. "Laplace's nebular system and Humboldt's Cosmos, they say, has opened a greater world than that of Homer! . . . What a degrading transformation, what

a base philosophy art is menaced with, by realism! If he were merely one who because of his lack of talent seeks to parade his new doctrines and thus conceal his real sterility, we could wait patiently. But, worse! . . .

"With *his brutal style, his repulsive and ignoble preoccupations he has gone farther than all the other realists.* Is Humanity composed only of rascals, madmen, and clowns? What is to become of the honest clarity (*sic!*) of our French tongue?"

Thus Ferdinand Brunetière launched himself on a career of "official glory," of defense of clericalism, of abandonment simultaneously to classical ideals as well as to trivial Parisian politics in the French Academy, by means of this first detonating attack on the "realists." It yields us a malicious pleasure in passing, to observe that of all these men, Flaubert, Goncourt, Zola, etc. . . . only Alphonse Daudet (whose lachrymose and saccharine volumes now gather dust at the bottom of library shelves), Brunetière vouchsafed was "worthy of living, surviving and lasting." Poor Daudet, though professing disgust for this safe-and-sane Olympian, now felt his bonnet buzzing with visions of the brocaded black and green uniform of the Academy. These phantasies collapsing, he became quite inconsolably mad and enmeshed himself in spleenful and distracted tirades and intrigues against friends and enemies alike, of which later . . .

Emile Zola, author of "much talent and invention—uselessly employed" (but at least no longer passed over in silence), continued tenaciously to work in the loneliness of his study. No, the honors of the cupola were ostensibly not for him. In his quest of a rapidly fabricated glory he had gone too far in the path of his curious and earthy "temper-r-r-a-ment." There was no turning now; and he saw, as in a rage, that he must go on, and "bury his contemporaries with the ponderous weight of his work"; he must "swallow his century." A pariah! Well, it was no longer merely the boast of a youthfully exuberant letter, that he was "dangerous to read . . . beyond the pale of good society."

Like Flaubert he became a lover of solitude, giving to his work all his cloistered and secluded labor. Not however—here he departed tenaciously from the master—in the hope of saying the same old truths in "more beautiful ways," but in banging hard at the planks of his vast program of social criticism, his "history of morals," through the sheer quantity and cumulative force of his cycle, through its powerful relief, through its maneuvering of great masses of people in action. "To make his characters swarm and to make the great central thing they swarmed about, as large as life, portentously, heroically big," as Henry James observes, "that was the task he set himself very nearly from the first, that was the secret he would triumphantly master."

In consummating this gigantic labor, he became almost a machine, pounding along alone, living only in his books and creating a deficit of personal adventure and liberty.

"The world, for me, ends at the gate of my garden," he had written in a preface to *Nouveaux Contes à Ninon,* a second collection of short tales, published in 1875.

In the incisive and even clever novels which issued from him in this period, it seems imperative to signal here, before considering the whole completed company of the Rougon-Macquart, at least those qualities which above all reveal the person of the author.

At times a considerable part of the very essence of Emile Zola seems to center itself about his nose! Florent, the tender Utopian, who has become a functionary in Les Halles, "began to carry everywhere with him, the fish market, in his clothes, in his hair, in his beard . . ." Claire, the fishwoman, spread about her, "an odor of spawn, one of those thick odors which rise from slimy cane and nenuphar, when the eggs cause the bellies of fish to swell and burst, to faint from love in the sunlight."

HIS "SPIRITUAL FATHER"

A Famous Caricature by the Gifted André Gill, in Which Balzac is Shown Saluting Zola, While the Latter Replies to the Salute of His Literary Ancestor. Zola is Said to Have Professed Much Satisfaction With This Cartoon.

These preciose phrases come from a man of hyperesthetic senses, one who like Baudelaire could say:

"My soul prances to perfumes as the souls of other men prance to music."

Zola is like one of those men (sometimes the abnormal, the mad) who are gifted with special senses. Whereas most people know things chiefly by hearing and seeing and feeling them; Zola knows them additionally by smelling them, by inhuming the mysterious effluvia which they exhale upon the air. Thus to eat a well-rotted cheese is a thrilling experience for Zola, charged with preludes, intermezzos, and crescendoes. By aid of his almost primordial olfactory senses, Zola created the "symphony of the cheeses" in "The Belly of Paris"—so that effete Parisian critics succumbed to nausea, they declared, on sniffing this celebrated chapter—thus certainly suggesting to Huysmans the idea of the "Symphony of Perfumes" in *A Rebours*. (Alas what delights we miss, we who mumble into our adenoids our live-long days!)

The nose of Emile Zola became fabulous.

"You have only to see this powerful organ with its wings dilated," writes one contemporary, "to divine a man with an exceptionally subtle *flair*, always titillated by the mysterious effluvia of the air. It is strong, fleshy, broad, penetrated by two thick nostrils, which seem to tremble delicately as they inhume the air in which they bathe."

He was the man who had lived most by his nose, who had been most deliciously agitated by all the perfumes, who had been more violated than all others, by all the stenches of the world.

In a Zola novel it is often the reaction to an odor sensed which sets one of his characters into motion.

In the *Conquête de Plassans* ("Conquest of Plassans"), which is effected by the advent of Jesuitic aid to the Bonapartist politicians, Mouret who rents a room to the Abbé Faujas notes that the priest exhales "a particular odor." From the moment he in-

stalled himself, the priest had brought "a mysterious, a strangely disquieting odor with him" into the house of this good bourgeois, Mouret: the smell of a priest, the smell of a man *otherwise* made.

In *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* ("Abbé Mouret's Transgression"), the son of this same free-thinking bourgeois, who has turned clerical, is assailed by "an odor of damnation" when he enters the house of the odd peasant philosopher, Jeanbernat. In his night of insomnia and struggle with temptation, he leans out of his window, attacked by all the perfumes of the huge exotic plants, the heated soil of this wild corner of Provence. The vast garden of "Paradou," drawn from an immense ruined estate in Zola's homeland, with its thousands of tropical flowers, its rank and swarming vegetation, is the theater of the Abbé's temptation and fall. Zola uses nearly 200 pages to describe the colors and perfumes of this garden.

Edmond de Goncourt wrote in his *Journal*, a brief paean to Zola's nose, an organ which revealed all the lights and shadows of his moods, his hopes, his disappointments, his anxieties:

"The nose of Zola is a very particular nose, a nose which interrogates, which approves, which condemns, a nose which is gay, a nose which is sad, a nose which punctuates the physiognomy of its master; the nose of a true hunting dog, whose impressions, sensations, appetites, devise the forms of its termination; two lobes, which one would describe at moments to be *fluttering*. To-day, it flutters not, this tip of his nose, and echoes the mournful mood of the romancer to the tune of 'Brother, we must die . . .'"

The upturned tip of the novelist's nose, the reader will remember, has a tiny but decided division, making two facets, which had long before drawn the attention of the exquisitely observant Goncourt.

These heightened senses, which Zola exploited godlessly, resulted in a certain mysticism about physical experiences. To this materialist, "nutrition and reproduction" were the two essential

and primordial functions, the center of natural life. He sought to give the smells of reproduction even as he did the smells of food. Thus he could become mystical about the stomach and the sexual organs where the germs of future generations, his Rougons and Macquarts were elaborated. The odors of these phenomena were to him like the subtle souls of things.

I have mentioned that in the little garden of the rue de la Condamine, Zola had a little cage for rabbits. He would watch them eating, sleeping, playing, copulating; he would touch them, caress their warm bellies, inhale the warm and tender animal smells of the tiny new-born rabbits.

Fascinated, he would call Alexis over: "Look at those two little rascals, Alexis," he would gloat. "They are making love . . ."

This theme issues in one of the early chapters of "Abbé Mouret," in which the priest's sister is represented as a passionate fancier of animal pets. She plunges her hand into their fur. "One would say that it was satin!" The priest, bending over the cage, could "bear no longer the heat rising from the littery. Life, pulling under the belly of the mother, had such a strong breath, that he felt its trouble at his temples."

The word *pullulating,* in the sense of reproducing and multiplying quickly, is often on Zola's lips. The miserable village, of which Abbé Mouret is curé, "clings to its rocks like the tangled vegetation of the valley . . . Marrying one another in a shameless promiscuity, they were born, they died, ever attached to this corner of earth, pullulating on their mulch, slowly, with the simplicity of trees sending up their sap, with no clear idea of the vast world beyond the yellow rocks among which they vegetated."

Zola pervades his pages with the atmosphere of rut and fecundation in those moments when he abandons himself to the poet of nature eternalized in him. The beauty and the mystery of the sexual act haunt him . . .

Henry Céard, long the confidant of Zola, pointed to many of his characterizations as revealing divers curious aspects.

Thus, Octave Mouret, the bourgeois householder of the *Conquête de Plassans,* is an extremely living and successful character, composed of a mixture of frailties, mild vices and intelligence. He loves his home, his possessions, his garden, and despite occasional asperities, his wife and his children. He is a clear-headed merchant, with, however, certain foibles: skepticism in religion, a trend toward republicanism in politics, accompanied by tenacity of opinion, curiosity and nervousness. His home is invaded through invisible stages by the priest, Faujas; his family is agitated against him, and the ensuing moroseness of Mouret is considered and whispered to be a sign of oncoming insanity. He acquires a persecution mania. First, he believes, because of the staring of his neighbors and people in the street that there is merely something wrong with his clothing, and slinks home in trouble. Then he scurries, then runs panic-stricken through the streets of Plassans until, since the people will have him mad, he is committed to the Santé. In this whole portrait, developed in the midst of an elaborate and progressive chain of events, the figure of Mouret is strikingly close to the bourgeois that was in Zola. A fat, nervous bouncing breathless little man, whose miseries are undignified, and not a little comical.

La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret, published in 1875, is the fifth of the series. It aroused a mild literary clatter, because it was thus far the most expertly written, the most audacious, and the most singularly *romantic* of these novels. One might add that it presented most directly for the age, the peculiarly offensive ideas which had crystallized in Zola.

The scenes in the garden of *Paradou,* to which the whole second book is devoted, are based upon the old poem: "Genesis," conceived in his youth, and reviving the old "fall" of man. Under the great tree, "bursting with sap," the Abbé and the wild young

Albine consummate their destiny of procreation. "It was a victory for the animals, the plants, the things, which had desired the entry of these two children into life. The whole park applauded resoundingly. . . ."

Love of the Virgin Mary in the Abbé Mouret (seen as apotheosized sexual love) is transformed into love of the earthly virgin, Albine. Like Stendhal, who, as he termed it, "disturbed his mind," Zola had preceded the age of Freud by two generations, following of course a broad current of ideas in motion already during the latter part of the nineteenth century. It was none the less audacious. But, there were so many *libertines*, the reader will object, in Paris, in Europe, in the whole world. Libertinism, however, was respectable, discreet; what interest did it have in the glorification of reproduction? This kind of romantic evangelism, the atmosphere of the *vates*, peeps out in Zola, young. Would it absorb him body and soul, when he was old and more child-like, weary of the cruel and impartial "human documents?"

The drama of "sin" is followed by the biblical one of "shame" (for the priest, at any rate), and "renunciation," which is rather of the New Testament. It was attended however, by a few vigorous blows for Naturalism, none of them lost upon the critics of the period.

Brother Archangias, for instance, is created for purposes of "relief" alongside of the tender and misguided ascetic Mouret. He is a peasant friar who curses and whips the gospel into the peasantry; a perfect sadist, as filthy-mouthed as he is filthy-minded.

Another stroke for Naturalism is the final page in which the death of Albine is announced to the priest, exalted in prayer, simultaneously with the glad outcry by his sister:

"Serge! Serge! The cow has just given birth to a calf!"

There was a considerable fixation of method in Zola the novelist. The books issued from his study in a regular flow, there

was now quite a hill of them. Each book was preceded by months of scurrying about Paris or in nearby places where stimulating "documents" could be discovered—*documents which lent themselves to Zola's purpose.* For the Abbé Mouret, he had gone to church often with his wife, attended mass, writing notes into his notebook with the stub of a pencil, off in a shadowed corner. He had accumulated clippings about the trial of a priest for sadistic outrages in the provinces. He had acquired further knowledge from a defrocked priest. Now he proposed writing a novel of the political scene under Louis Napoleon. Since he visioned a Rougon who joyed only in power and intellectual domination he drew largely from a phase of himself.

He wanted exact knowledge of the court of Compiègne, of Napoleon's personality. He found a book, written by a former valet, "The Court at Compiègne, Revelations of a Valet-de-Chambre," which he absorbed thoroughly, including its occasional errors and exaggerations. He himself had had some experience in parliamentary matters, from the days in 1871, when he was political reporter for *La Cloche*, and secretary to Glais-Bizoin in the Gambetta government. Furthermore, he would perk up his ears sharply, whenever the conversation among his friends had the possibility of literary material.

Entering Flaubert's one day in March, 1875, he collapsed into a chair and exclaimed in a voice full of trouble: "How much annoyance it gives me, how much pain that Compiègne business gives me!"

How many candles, he asked Flaubert, were there at the table?

There were about one hundred and twenty, Flaubert believed.

Was there a great deal of noise during the conversation? No, their tone was moderated, and when the Emperor had some observation to make, they all became silent.

What did they talk about? What did the Emperor say?

Then Flaubert, "half-pitying the ignorance of Zola in these

matters, half intrigued to show the two or three visitors present that he had spent a fortnight at Compiègne, acted before them in his *robe-de-chambre,* a capital emperor, with a dragging leg, an arm curved behind his back, twisting his moustaches, and muttering idiotic sentences."

"Yes," he said, seeing that Zola had taken out his pad of paper. "That man was made of pure stupidity, sheer stupidity."

"True," added Goncourt. "But stupidity is generally garrulous while his was silent. There was his strength, and it permitted everything to be supposed."

"His Excellency Eugène Rougon," the minister who seeks only power, abandoning all scruples, using corrupt adherents, upon whom he showers gold which he himself scorns, was the character born of these studies. Surrounding him was the horde of vultures and capitalists, who made of the third Bonaparte's reign a veritable carpet-bag paradise. This band, much as he despised them, were his making and his undoing. "I am their thing!" he would exclaim to the Emperor. "Without them, I am nothing!"

This novel wrongly was assumed by many to be a *roman à clef*, based on the notorious Duc de Morny (bastard half-brother of Napoleon III); others likened "Eugène Rougon" to Eugène Rouher, likewise prime minister.

Months after the book was published, Zola was present at Flaubert's again. Daudet was describing the brilliant Duc de Morny, his charm, his strange whims, his relationship with Madame D., etc. In the meantime Zola, who always became very agitated whenever the conversation touched on something that was convertible into a novel, began shifting about in his chair, describing little semi-circles.

"Why there is a superb book in all that!" he exclaimed. "There's a character for you. . . . If I had only had that for 'His Excellency Rougon!' Don't you think so, Flaubert?"

Flaubert—"Why, it is strange, but I don't see any book in it."

Zola—"There isn't any book in it, no book in it? But yes, I tell you there is! Isn't there, Goncourt? . . . But you, Flaubert, why didn't you do something on that period!" (His worried frown appears.)

Flaubert—"Why, because I should have had to find the form and the manner of treatment for it, in order to use it. And then beside, I am *une bedolle* now!"

Daudet—"What's that?"

Flaubert—"Nobody knows better than I, how much I am a *bedolle*. . . .

"Yes, a *bedolle* . . . An old sheikh, eh, what?"

He finished his sentence with a vaguely despairing gesture.

The statesman "Eugène Rougon," according to Paul Alexis, was none other than the author himself. Alexis, amusing, excessively simple and touching Boswell, often *lies officially*, or reveals through his very naïveté.

"Eugène Rougon, to my way of thinking, is Emile Zola as a minister," he writes. "That is to say, the dream of what he would have been had he applied his ambitions to the world of politics. . . . A picture of the chaste and moral man, who loves power intellectually less for the advantages it brings than as manifestation of his own strength."

Adding the moment of confidence we find in Goncourt's "Journal," ". . . the power I feel myself exerting from my humble hole in Paris . . ." to an indiscretion of Alexis: "He was tormented by the ambition to become a field-marshal in the war of letters," we have another aspect of this manysided personality, at once brutal and shy, stubbornly courageous and apprehensive, sensual and ascetic.

"Their hatred comforted him, buried him deeper in his scorn of the human herd. . . . He became intoxicated on insults, greater in the pride of his loneliness," writes Zola of his hero.

After the appearance of *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*—it had first been published in Russia, where Zola was already exerting a formidable influence on the generation of Tolstoy and Tchekoff—the press resounded with attacks. Those of Barbey d'Aurevilly, the "*catholique hystérique*," barbed, impassioned, wholly personal, afford more enjoyment that the more pondered utterances of Brunetière, or Schérer, or Pontmartin.

"We are becoming butchers!" he had written of the "Belly of Paris." "It is pork that ravishes Zola, that he writes about with intense passion.

"Rabelais, our immortal Homer-Priapus laughed when he wrote of these things. Zola is grave. He is deliberately audacious. . . . He seeks to corrupt society as much as he can. . . . It (*L'Abbé Mouret*) is a fanfare of filth! It is scientific indecency. He presents the beast in man . . . It is an apotheosis of the universal rut!"

Brunetière accused Zola of plagiarism, likened him to the obscene writers of the past, Restif de la Bretonne, Paul de Koch, and what was worse—drew a parallel between the romantic prose style of Gautier and that of Zola. Lo, Zola was not even Naturalistic!

And yet, it is somewhat depressing, when you have a furious longing to dominate and to command, to feel yourself instead surrounded by so much hostility and hatred. It seems almost *fated* that he be persecuted, for he announces sorrowfully to Charpentier that the plans for his next novel call for a work on the lowly poor, the working class. "I have thought and thought about it, but alas, I fear that I am entrenching myself only further in my artistic impenitence."

In contrast with Flaubert, who sought a new method of form and treatment for each new novel, Zola's method went on consistently, triumphantly. He believed in it with the simplest and utmost confidence. Instead of his writing "The Rougon-Macquart," it was as if "The Rougon-Macquart" were writing him.

He boarded the seventh novel of the series, which now shaped itself as including fifteen or sixteen volumes instead of ten.

It was at this time that Henry James probably first met Zola, on a Sunday afternoon at Flaubert's.

"Several men of letters of a group were assembled under the roof of the most distinguished of their number, where they exchanged free confidences on current work, plans and ambitions, in a manner full of interest for one never previously privileged to see artistic conviction, artistic passion so systematic and so articulate."

"Well, I for my part," James recalled Zola saying, "am engaged on a book which is to be a study of the morals of the common people, for which I am making a collection of all the *gros mots* (bad words) of the language, those with which the vocabulary of the people, those with which their familiar talk bristles. . . ."

"I was struck with the tone in which he made the announcement, without bravado and without apology, simply as an interesting idea that had come to him, and that he was working really to arrive at character, and particular truth, with all his conscience; just as I was struck with the unqualified interest that his plan excited. . . . It was on a *plan* he was working, formidably, almost grimly as his fatigued face and round shoulders showed."

The social and natural history of *Les Rougon-Macquart* was the truth to Zola. It was only because of his intense vision of this truth that he could have gone on with the long, concentrated, merciless effort which was making and stamping him.

Indeed Zola began to feel "run down" under the nervous strain and the depression which at times conquered him. He had become somewhat more at ease financially, having just acquired an additional job as dramatic critic of *Le Bien Public*, at 500 francs a month. This was an excellent and progressive new journal, with whose political program he was largely in sympathy. He was

enabled to take a vacation in the summer by the sea, at Saint-Aubin.

At Flaubert's, where the master was frequently found now in a deeply melancholy state, often in an access of tears owing to his poverty (he had given his whole fortune away to his niece, whose husband was in financial straits), and to hours of physical suffering, the realists spoke of their maladies with self-commiseration. Flaubert had hallucinations; after a long vigil at his desk he had the obsession "that someone was standing behind him and looking over his shoulder." Zola too had hallucinations. "He complained of bats rushing by, of flights of birds to right and left, while he worked." All of them wept often over the bondage to which their art enchained them.

Thus Flaubert admonished Zola to do nothing during his vacation, "to write nothing. We have all been concerned about you. . . ."

Before leaving town Zola had had a conference with his publisher, Georges Charpentier. It troubled his conscience that in four years of association he had fallen behind on his contract by four books.

"Let us see," said Charpentier, "by our agreement, as things stand now, you owe me about 10,000 francs."

"True," said Zola, his brow forming deep creases.

"However, your books have been selling of late. Our original agreement should not continue. It is unfair to you. I shall establish a royalty from now on of 50 centimes per volume. According to that rate, it is I who owe you twenty-thousand francs, or exactly ten thousand after counting off what I have already disbursed to you in advance. The cashier will draw a check for you!"

Never had Zola touched such a considerable sum! Ease had come into the house of the rue St. Georges, his new residence. Mme. Zola had two servants now! The garden here was a little sad, because of the high walls surrounding it. Now Zola no longer

tended it, since his study was above the ground floor. Besides he had less time; it was less amusing.

In Normandy, he found the scenery "surprisingly flat and ugly." He, who was accustomed to the red mountains of Provence, found the ocean quite different from the Mediterranean with its matchless blue of sea and sky. Traveling "broke him up."

"I am not a man for traveling," he wrote. "A change of place overturns my whole life. It is more than a week now and I have not settled down yet. I must be accustomed to the corner of the table at which I work. It is hard to work here. One is too tempted to go out."

Soon he was more composed and refreshed. "I am working hard, and am myself surprised at what a good child I am to remain working in my improvised study, before a window which gives on the ocean. I must say that the ships disturb me a little. I spend whole half-hours following their sails, the pen falling from my hands. . . .Yet I am constructing the plan of my new novel, the novel on the common people, for which I have extraordinary dreams. . . ."

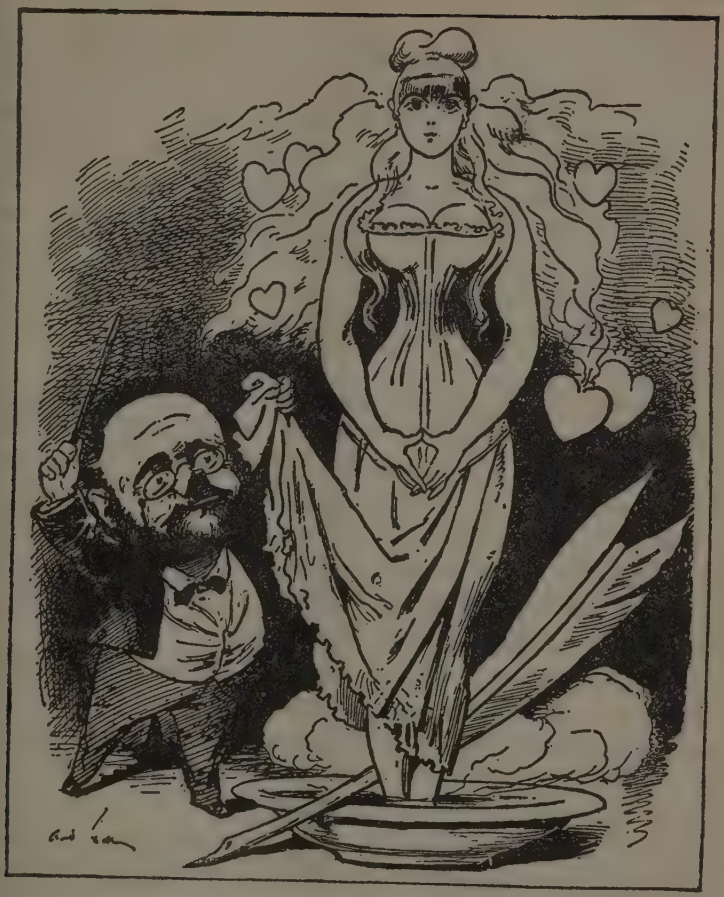
He had brought a large collection of notes for this new novel from Paris with him; observations on a smithy's shop, a laundry, a gold-chain maker's. He had with him also Delvau's "Dictionary of Slang." He had conceived roughly his principal characters, Gervaise Macquart, Coupeau, her husband, and Gervaise's previous lover, August Lantier. He dreamed of having an action that would be quite simple. As he lay on the beach, he thought, as he recalls, that he would have it "perfectly simple, like the line of the sea and sky, and the tall ship against the horizon." And so he thought of having Gervaise's old lover, Lantier, coming back to thrust himself upon her household, making a ménage of three. Utterly simple, and yet as it appeared, an astounding invention in the book, one which recalls the theme of *Madeleine Férat*, the early novel,

and was born out of his own most intimate, unconscious fears and preoccupations.

Now delighted with his "plan," as it was elaborating itself, he wrote to Charpentier, "I am going to return with the plan all completed. I am enchanted with it: it is very simple and vigorous. I believe that the life of the working class has never been treated on such a large scale."

In the afternoons he would go down to the beach with Alexandrine. It was with great difficulty that he got her to bathe in the sea, and for that matter he himself did not relish it. All about them were the noisy bourgeois families who had come from Paris with their children. Most often Zola would go wandering along the shore, stumbling plumply about the rocky crevices which lined the coast, evading the silly summer visitors in their sillier beach costumes. The wind blew through his already sparse, military cut hair, the strong sunlight glaring from the white sand caused him to squint reflectively; for he was buried all these days in his peopled and tumultuous novel of the submerged classes. He had even found a title in the slang dictionary by Delvau; *L'Assommoir,* a perfectly ripping word, and really little known or used as yet. Bars in the poor quarters were called "*zinc,*" "*bouge,*" "*bistro,*" but never "*assommoir,*" which would mean more or less a place where you are stunned, hammered into unconsciousness by the potion served, a potion termed "vitriol" by the clientèle.

Returning to Paris after this summer, the Zolas entered upon a larger and more animated kind of life. Zola, now dramatic critic for the *Bien Public,* went out to the theater night after night. Here, on the boulevards, where the brilliance and clatter of the Empire still persisted, where every one knew the Sarceys, the Paul de Saint-Victors, none knew this somber-faced man by sight, although his name evoked the idea of a crude, boorish, irreverent personage, who frequented no fashionable salons, whose depressing books boasted little more than a begrudged



—André Gill

THE BIRTH OF NANA-VENUS

"A Theme for Future Bouguereaus": Venus Rising From the Wave?—Nay. From a Slop-basin—"

succès d'estime. At the office of the *Bien Public* he was still known as a "bear."

In the columns of his newspaper, Zola thundered against the mediocrity of the contemporary stage. The plays of Alexandre Dumas-fils, of Scribe, of Victorien Sardou, all of which Bernard Shaw has virtually slaughtered by the derisive epithet, "Sardoodledom," Zola claimed to be like so much trivial clock-work. The characters were mere "mannequins, brimming with Parisian sprightliness," and the time would come when the public would be sick of all the wire-pulling, of all the recovered wills of the fifth act which reveal the natural child to be the daughter of some great lord.

The house in the rue St. George began to be less lonely. Zola and the other men, Flaubert, Goncourt, exerted a profound influence through their writing on the new generations. These men meeting at Flaubert's, or at their celebrated monthly dinners during the winter, had come to be known as the "Quadrilateral of the French Novel." Uncrowned, resisted in high quarters, they formed a literary hierarchy, which was now succeeded by a younger order under the leadership of Zola.

To the younger men, like "Joris-Karl" Huysmans, and Henry Céard, who had come out of the army in 1871, disillusioned and enraged (Guy de Maupassant, a stripling, had escaped heartbroken from Sédan joining bands of freebooters in the great retreat), the more excessive temperament of Emile Zola exerted even a sharper appeal than that of Flaubert and Goncourt whose character was moulded under the Empire, and the last Orleanist King.

It was Huysmans who for some years had been reading the Zola novels and urging them upon his friend Henry Céard. Céard, one day, determined to visit Zola. It was not easy to obtain his address, and when he did it was with some trepidation that he mounted toward the Batignolles section, for "Zola was said to be extremely reserved, very careful not to reveal himself to the pub

lic." Had he not written, "For me the world ends at the gate of my garden!"

Well, there was not very much of a garden at number 21, rue St. Georges, and the male servant who took his card, regarded Céard with diffidence as he bade him wait for the master.

It was a Sunday morning. "The presentation was not without comic aspects." Henry Céard's visiting card, through the address it bore, gave the suspicion that he was a wine salesman. Zola appeared at length, dressed in a gray jersey blouse and pantaloons, wearing sabots. In his ugliness he was interesting and somewhat impressive. Stocky, of medium height, with the broad square frame of an athlete, he confronted Céard mistrustfully. His extremely pale face was adorned with a heavy, bristling brown beard, and the high forehead, "like a tower," well exposed, surmounted by stiff, bristling military cut hair.

"I am sorry, but I don't believe we need any wines for our table at this moment," he said as he scrutinized the blushing young man.

"I am not a wine merchant, sir," expostulated Céard. Stammering and blurting in turn, although usually a self-possessed person, he explained with a sincerity that was superior to his rhetoric the literary motives which had led him to pay this visit.

"I have read all your books, and find them great, and so I have simply come to see you and tell you this," he continued. In his circle of friends, he went on, young writers who were making their painful start, such as Huysmans, Léon Hennique, Octave Mirbeau, all read and admired the author of *Les Rougon-Macquart* and hoped earnestly for the ultimate completion and success of the whole cycle.

It was heady praise for Zola, solitary worker, who had certainly not been spoiled by his public. His formidable front, which actually concealed one of the most shy and timid of men, unbent and wore an involuntary flush of pleasure. He conducted Céard into the house and introduced him to Alexandrine. He lost him-

self in the grateful irresponsibility of a long conversation with this young man, whom he came to love as a brother. He urged him to come again, and said:

"Your friends also are welcome."

On the following Sunday, Céard brought Huysmans to the lonely house, where Zola toiled with sustained ferocity over his *L'Assommoir*. Huysmans, a tormented little man, struggling internally with his obscure talent, was warmly received and encouraged by Zola. He brought his first books, *Dragoir à Epices* and *Marthe*, which bore too clearly the imprint of Naturalism, and presented them with a written dedication to the "master."

"You are surely one of our novelists of tomorrow," Zola told him. "But frankly . . . you should write in a style that is more *bonhomme* (more simple or straightforward); your style is rich enough not to be abused. Intensity, in my opinion, should be secured not by the color of words, so much as by their *value*. . . ."

Huysmans submitted gratefully to the ideas of the "master" for many years. . . . The circle which formed itself, including soon a gay and indolent young littérateur who was as yet unknown and wrote little, Guy de Maupassant ("Guy de Valmont" by *nom de plume*), the faithful Paul Alexis, and Léon Hennique, all of them under thirty—and Hennique only twenty-four—reflected to Zola the influence and power of his friendship in an artistic sense. It was a profound comfort; and when he related to Flaubert the unexpected visit of Céard, the older man exclaimed quite naïvely:

"But isn't that nice! It never fails to give one great pleasure!"

On Thursday evenings the group came, not in ceremonial dress, as to a "soirée," but as Zola said, "in working costume," and took tea with the Zolas.

"Mme. Zola was tall, brunette, distinguished looking," is Huysmans' recollection, "her eyes had that astonishing, deep black of certain Spanish children in the paintings of Velasquez. She would prepare the tea. The welcome would be frank, without

constraint, without visible self-consciousness. You could do as you pleased, chat, drink, laugh heartily with wide open mouth. The samovar sang. Zola would mount on the arm of a chair, saddle-fashion and talk in a deliberate manner. We were simply younger friends and writers who professed for the man a sincere sympathy, and for the writer a fervent enthusiasm."

Of the many Zolas, the Zola at home was the most appealing, and the least known. These friendships were something he had starved for in his shyness and mistrust of people, in his pride and his fear of being wounded. It was a revival in a more mature form of that passionate and almost girlish comradeship in Aix with Paul Cézanne and Louis Baille.

In his conversation there was a "*bonhomie*," at once insinuating and explosively humorous, which made one think sometimes of the cruel jesters in Molière, or of the Machiavellian and grinning raillery of Father Grandet in Balzac. . . . Persuasive, extremely logical, he loved to draw from others against their will corroboration of his favorite notions, often of things he *ignored*, says Céard. "Many times, in those hours of violent discussion and hot retorts, his sharp and resounding common sense would dominate. He himself was very *contra-suggestive*. He would seek to bring the most opposed minds around to his ideas, often using extreme tact and delicacy. If he did not always capture them, he at least troubled their minds and caused them to reflect. . . ."

But this Zola was scarcely known, who was "warm-hearted and tender with his friends," who kept his friends entertained till far after midnight, so that "the last omnibus gone, they would perforce trudge home in the cold night, Huysmans and Céard on their long route to the rue de Sèvres and to Bercy, warming themselves with the memory of the brimming evening."

"Under his manner of a bear-cub," wrote Alphonse Daudet, whose friendship was capable of extreme contrasts, "Zola is without question a genuine talent, a keen intellect and a character. Furthermore, he is a perfect man of letters, very straight, and very

brave. I knew him in this way: My *Contes de Lundi,* had just appeared: Zola had written a favorable article in a radical newspaper. They would not insert it because I seemed to them too reactionary. Zola, who had only met me twice, said: 'The article must appear, or I leave.' And he was very poor at this time."

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L'Assommoir now began appearing in *Le Bien Public.* The publishers of this newspaper had agreed to pay the author 10,000 francs for the serial rights alone, merely from the plans of the book. Certainly it was a handsome sum. Had the attacks in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* by Brunetière and his kind brought this about? It was rather that the subject, a cross-section of the working class, never really done before, seemed propitious to the liberal newspaper, which was engaged at the period in a spirited struggle with President MacMahon and his crowd of pseudo-royalist politicians. The new work began to assume the importance almost of a political or social event. . . .

For long months during the winter of 1875-1876, he had been building up this book. The precept of his great teacher, Villemessant, was before him always: "One must surprise the public." Thus from a novel of clerical life, he had swung abruptly into one of the working quarter of Paris. With his numerous Rougons and Macquarts he was bent on penetrating every stratum of human society, rascals, murderers, saints, panders, whores, bourgeois, priests, soldiers, statesmen, shopkeepers, good, bad, stupid, malicious, angelic. But above all, Zola knew his poor people, his gross, his bestial people. In the black days when he had first come to Paris from Provence he had lived with his mother in one of those large, grimy tenements of the rue Saint-Jacques which housed veritably hundreds of families in every walk of life, so long as it were an impoverished one. One of the rooms he had occupied as a bohemian had been adjoining the apartment of an undertaker and he may well, in his hours of faintness and misery, longed, like

his Gervaise, to be taken away by the grave-digger along with the others. For the début of Zola had been one of the cruelest in the annals of French letters. . . . Above all he had known hunger, "the empty, gnawing entrails of the poor, like beasts gnashing their teeth, and pouncing upon the very garbage. . . ."

And so from his youth, he had conserved a deep impression of the life of the poor, with its parade of violence, drunkenness, of families debauched by alcohol; he had witnessed "things of astonishing color and shape" . . . a funeral, great joyous repasts, feasts, and swinishness. I mention this, because of the exceptionally happy results in this case of Zola's "scientific method" and effect of perfect harmony of style and treatment.

The idea of this book had been with him for a long time, in fact from the very day he had planned the whole Rougon-Macquart cycle, in 1868, seven years before, and laid it before the publisher Lacroix.

He proceeded of course to gather material, documents, episodes in his usual way. He spent months reading books on the working-class, standing about in the streets of the poor quarter not far from the rue Saint-Georges, studying the environment in which his characters were to live, noting episodes which took place in the streets, fixing eventually upon a certain street-corner bar, and a certain black tenement house where his drama was to take place. The descriptions which play such an important part in *L'Assommoir* are exceedingly *living;* for Zola's theory of description was "a state of environment which determines and completes the human being." This he had derived from Taine, who had written, "man cannot be separated from his *milieu;* he leaves his imprint upon his exterior life, his house, his furniture, his affairs, his gestures. . . . To express everything one must express this multitude of effects and assemble this multitude of causes." Thus, if his laundress, Gervaise, is happy, the street of the *Goutte-d'Or* is gay and sunlit; or when she is courageous, uncertain or despairing in other instances, the "gutter-stream is rose-colored, very

tender," or, "reflecting the blue, the deep azure of a summer sky," or "black, filthy."

He took episodes from the newspapers, for instance, that of a child whose mother having been beaten to death by her drunken father, inherited both the care of the household, the other children, and the brutality which eventually destroyed her. Out of this numerous material, arranged and docketed, he constructed his characters, informed himself of their trades, their daily activities.

He proceeded to his plans for the story. From the manuscripts he has left us, we know the whole procedure of his building; we know how he groped from one idea to another, seeking for the central drama, "the single thread which would knit this multitude of things and people together." He himself, bore in him, as Flaubert observed, "two distinct fellows," one prone to the same type of melodramas, the "same kind of horrors as Eugène Sue, while lacking the latter's fertility of invention," and the other, the realistic being, who drove himself to be cold, balanced, observant, to resist the melodramatic in his other nature.

We witness this very discord in the "sketch" of *L'Assommoir*: he has Gervaise Macquart abandoned with her two children by her lover, Lantier; he has her married, living with Coupeau tranquilly, and he arrives at the idea of Coupeau disintegrating under drink; and then while groping for a drama, there returns the old obsession of having the first lover come back. This harked back, no doubt, to the nights of passion and insomnia in his first years with Alexandrine, when he would imagine the useless, absurd situation of her first lover, the doctor, coming back and claiming her through some mystical prior power over her. . . . From this he proceeds to another stage. "What will be the banal drama of the common people that will take place now? Some scene of brutal jealousy which ends with the play of knives!" What a frightful dénouement that would be! But no, he revokes all this, almost at once. "I wish to hold to the current of commonplace lives, to the simplest facts, while making it very touching." And so he invents

a terrible drama, "of a magnificent reality and a bold cruelty." It would be "humanity complete and hideously superb, or superbly hideous." A drama proceeding by easy and perfectly life-like stages. Coupeau will fall a victim to drink, but not overnight; rather in a chain of events. He is a roofer; now and then roofers have a bad fall. Well, after years of work he will fall, and in the long convalescence while his limbs heal there will be a perceptible and ultimately decisive change of character. . . . Later he will become softened by drink. Then Lantier comes back. An angry scene with Lantier? "No, rather have Coupeau invite Lantier into his home." A corking idea, that! "After all, we are brothers, are we not? and those children are yours" etc. Then, the household of two men and a woman, an astounding story. He imagines its gradual progression in every detail, groping and stumbling his way, striking out one scene and replacing it always with the most plausible, the simplest, the barest development. The two men will live off this one woman. They will debauch her. She must be made very good, jovial, sympathetic. "All she wants is work, bread, a clean home, children, not to be beaten . . ." All of which, little as they are, are taken from her in turn.

"The character of this book," Zola goes on soliloquizing, "must be simplicity itself; a story of a magisterial nakedness, few complications, few scenes, nothing romantic, or forced.

"I shall have Gervaise die at forty-one, slowly, horribly, exhausted by pain and misery." *

Among the casual notes which complete this folio of original manuscript, there is a page of miscellaneous observations, in pencil, among which Zola scribbled at a tangent:

"a success"

and then lower down toward the foot of the page:

a resounding success!"

* *Cf.* Appendix: "Zola's Technique."

It is curiously as if he wished to give himself courage as he worked. For while in the midst of the book, his wife fell ill and caused an interruption of some weeks, after which he resumed work with a certain apathy, the keen edge gone. And besides, a friend who had read the almost completed manuscript, predicted a "demi-fiasco."

Chronicles in the newspapers spoke of Zola's new novel in tones that aroused great curiosity. Soon an uproar began in the press, on the boulevards, in the cafés. Tony Revillon, a journalist, familiar with workers' circles, sent word to Zola: "Tell him not to worry about this book; it will have a great sale." And indeed, on the wings of the most violent and public literary controversy that France had seen since the youthful days of Victor Hugo, *L'Assommoir* became heard of, sung of throughout the land, throughout the world. Copies of the newspaper were snatched up eagerly; the slang which Zola had adopted, even absorbed into his description and analysis, was taken up; the word "Assommoir" itself aroused extreme approval, condemnation or laughter.

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The Zolas had quietly gone away now to Piriac, in Brittany, after the agreeable winter season in Paris, during which a group of Zolaïsts had been born. Zola, for whom these were the first summer vacations, had promised himself this year, a stay in the "wild" recesses of Brittany, in recompense for the commonplaceness of the Normandy beaches, "for I know not what old romantic depths there are in me," he had confessed in a letter to a friend, "and I dream of rocks with steps leading down a cliff, of shoals beaten by the tempest, of riven trees dipping their hair in the sea. . . ." Here the party, for the Charpentiers were with them, visited old villages dating from feudal times, wandered along the craggy coast, eating ravishing oysters in out of the way nooks, and even experiencing a dangerous accident along one of the bad roads

where the carriage overturned and Zola acted with courage in helping to rescue and carry off the stricken ladies, hurled in a mass of tangled hoops, stays and flounces,—Alexandrine Zola even fainting away perfectly in a ditch. No serious consequences; save that some of the ladies whom he carried out through the windows of the carriage, "weighed their weight" as he related.

But the country was gay, "primitive and wild." They occupied a large and comfortable house, in a lonely spot. They could watch the pigs and geese go down to bathe in the sea like men, and Zola, little gourmand, could "gorge himself on sea-food from morning to night," a habit which as he confessed gave him some bad nights.

Suddenly, a friend forwarded him from Paris an issue of the *Figaro,* in which Albert Millaud had on September 1, 1876, written a long and violent attack on *L'Assommoir,* appearing serially in the *Bien Public.* Involuntarily, the article reflected the power and intensity of Zola's novel. It was all a vicious calumny on the working-classes, Millaud contended; "the people" were pictured in the darkest colors, as drunkards, brutes, whores and cuckolds. No! It could not but be a perfidious distortion of the truth, and what was worse was that it came from the pen of a writer who professed to be *democratic* and even *socialistic,* and was published in a presumably radical and republican newspaper. Obviously the *Figaro,* still under the guidance of Villemessant and now on the conservative side, had seized this as an occasion to embarrass the *Bien Public,* whose party depended upon the masses for their votes. Millaud, moreover, attacked Zola's methods, his style and his language, which he termed coarse, obscene and completely vernacular and ungrammatical. Zola did not even know how to write good French! It must be noted that the legend that Zola could not write well dates from here on.

Zola replied in a tempered letter, claiming that he desired not to be judged by the appearance of his novel in installments, that its moral import could not be calculated properly in this form, that he had sought to picture the working classes with an exact-

ness that required using the colloquial language of the slums, and finally that he hoped not to be condemned before the novel was even completely read.

Villemessant with his usual tactics, published this letter on the 7th of September together with an even more vicious attack to which he had spurred Millaud on. Zola was a traitor to his principles, he revealed himself as a brute, a débauché, a sadist, a morbid purveyor of filth, reveling in all this merely for the joy it gave him and for no higher motive, etc., etc. . . .

Zola replied now at length, and with ardor. Although his letter was not published by the *Figaro,* the battle spread all over the press.

"First of all," he said, "I do not accept the label (of democrat and socialist writer), which you paste on me. I am simply a novelist, without epithet . . . and if you wish to qualify me, say that I am a Naturalistic novelist. You should read all my books, understand and see their ensemble before jumping to such conclusions, before making such grotesque and odious judgments as are being circulated on my person and works. *Ah! if you only knew how my friends are amused by the amazing legends with which the public is regaled every time that my name is mentioned! If you knew how much the drinker of blood, the ferocious novelist, is an honest bourgeois, a man of study and art devoted to his principles and living quietly in his corner!* I deny no story about me. I go on working, and leave it to time and the good faith of the public to discover me amid the mass of stupidities which have been piled up."

It was a pity to destroy such a picturesque legend, but is not the new one equally as good? Here is a writer who, to quote Othello, expresses his "worst thoughts with his worst words," who gives us to understand that he will not keep his mouth shut about anything, that he will tear the veil from all our illusions, and yet, and yet, he is in reality himself a peaceable little bourgeois, loving his fireside, his wife, and his dog Mathew!

Zola as the "Professor of Energy" in His Study, Composing *Nana*. Note the Regular Disposition of Objects Upon His Desk, also the Plumpness of the Author at This Period (About 1877).

THE VILLA OF MÉDAN

Purchased Originally with the Gains from *L'Assommoir;* in the Center Is the Tower Added Upon the Success of *Nana,* and to the Right the Annex Justified by *Pot Bouille,* etc. In the End the House Became Nine or Ten Times Its Original Dimensions, the Abode of a Veritable Giant.

But even newer aspects of Zola were being revealed. There was the moralist. Hitherto, he had refused to moralize, or to take sides. Now he admitted, since his critics refused to see it, that a clear lesson could be detached from the pages of his book. Since they would have the moral, here it was: "Educate the worker, take him out of the misery in which he lives, combat the crowding and the promiscuity of the workers' quarters where the air thickens and stinks; above all prevent drunkenness which decimates the people and kills mind and body. . . . I am no maker of fairy-tales, and I feel that the only way to attack evil is with a hot iron!"

Zola always closed such replies with the curiously contradictory menace, that "of the human material that passed through his hands" he had not told the worst, that "he had chosen the less frightful realities;" that "he was an honest novelist, whose sole ambition was to leave a work behind him that would be as big, as living as he could make it."

In effect, *L'Assommoir* justified the observation of a gifted Italian writer, Edmondo de Amicis, who made Zola's acquaintance at this period:

"One would say he was a man who having been wounded by the world, avenged himself by tearing away her mask and showing her to be what she is, shameful and odious."

"He never smiled once, during the times that I saw him," says de Amicis further. "He has developed the *poetics of the disgusting,*" screamed Barbey d'Aurevilly, "as Hugo developed the *poetics of the gothic and the ugly!*"

"A calumny on France! . . ." cried the press, "a mass of filth, which should be handled with forceps . . . a monstrous abortion. Literary gutter-cleaner! . . ."

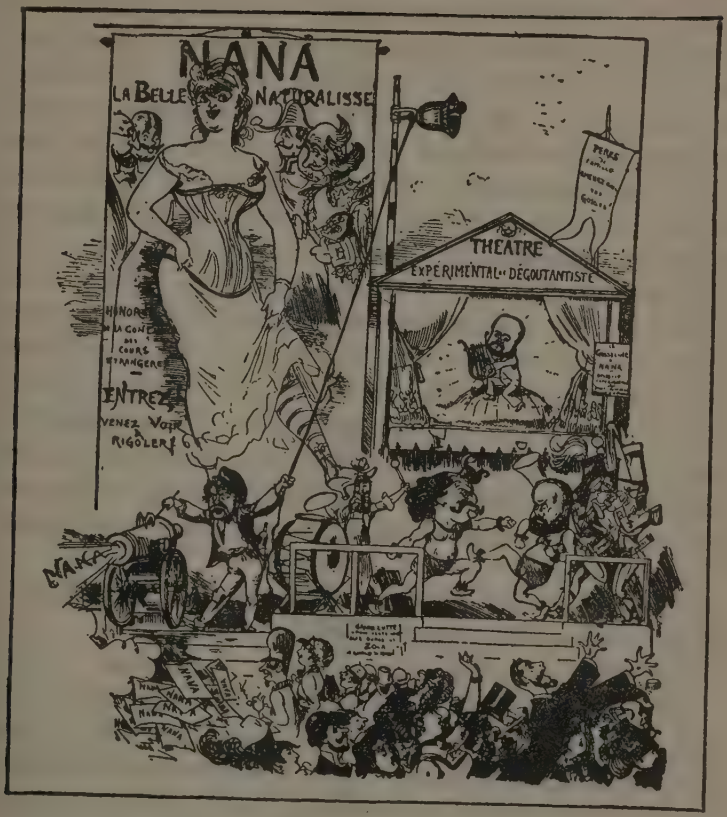
"It was no longer criticism," Zola observed calmly, "it was a massacre."

He had come up from Brittany in the fall to take part in the battle of Naturalism. The newspaper, *Le Bien Public,* finding itself politically embarrassed by this "slice of life" which "represented

the people in abominable colors," had listened to the rising clamor from its readers and ceased publication of *L'Assommoir* midway, although paying the author in full his ten thousand francs. At this juncture, Catulle Mendès, the poet and editor of the *République des Lettres*, had again come to Zola's rescue, as he had several years before in the case of *La Curée*, and undertook to complete serial publication of the novel in his paper. He did this with great publicity, thousands of copies being hawked about the streets of Paris and absorbing many of the readers of the *Bien Public*, not to speak of other journals.

For two years Paris, all France, simmered with *L'Assommoir*. When in January, 1877, Charpentier issued it in book form, he was swamped with orders. Edition after edition was run off as swiftly as the presses could go. It was an unheard of, a stunning success before the vast, unimaginable public! Within the space of some months, the 100,000 mark (incredible fifty years ago) was passed. Popular editions were issued at two sous per pamphlet. The copies were passed from hand to hand, millions read it. Overnight virtually Emile Zola became the most famous writer in France, in Europe, in the whole world!

The circumstances of a universal success are often droll and accidental. In this case there were other factors: namely, a political situation; and again, the fact that Emile Zola had had high dreams, had sought bitterly to fabricate success for himself. It was logical, it was over-due; the force of his books had been accumulating for nearly ten years since the somber and passionate drama of *Thérèse Raquin*, and now it was like the bursting of a dam; the torrent rushed through. The books of Emile Zola became public episodes, "morality in action;" he became a colorful, familiar figure upon the stage of the world, his face, his nose, his paunch were caricatured in myriads of post-cards, in newspaper cartoons, in interviews, in the songs of music-halls. The crowd hammered at his door



1879. THE BIG PARADE

"Stop! Look! Enter! See Nana—A Naturalistic Spectacle. Not of Marble, Ladies and Gentlemen, but of Flesh!" ("La Caricature," 1879.) *Zola is Seen Boxing with Dumas-fils on the Lower Stage of the Grand Théatre Expérimental et Dégoutantiste.*

and demanded to know what he looked like, how he wrote, what kind of tobacco, what kind of bicycles he preferred, what were the favorite books he read before going to bed! His gestures, his actions now revealed an extraordinary show-man, another Barnum, trained by Villemessant; each book struck at new material, new veins; each polemic into which he launched himself—and they were not few—whipped up a new storm of indignation or laughter. He had the gift of exciting public opinion by his every act. Every letter, every new play or novel brought an uproar of applause and hatred. . . .

Under the full glare of the public gaze, a great change could not but take place in Zola's nature. The strain, the responsibility, the augustness of such a situation, beyond his most fervent dreams, marked him deeply. He became the "Shark," terror of French civilization! At a banquet, in a public gathering, people would whisper, nervously, as the stout, pale faced little man took his place, "There goes the Shark! . . . Sh! he is taking out his notebook. He is making observations. . . . He is going to *write about us!* . . . ah-ah-ah!"

It came to be said of him, as of the elder Alexandre Dumas, "When he sneezes, Paris turns over in her sleep!"

Was *L'Assommoir's* success accidental? Yes and no.

It was not even Zola's preferred work. But on the other hand, it was more complete, more universal, more heroic than the preceding novels; and in effect it went to absolute extremes in many directions: it scraped the absolute dregs, the utter bilge, while disengaging a sheer "pity and terror" comparable to the highest drama or romance of the past.

Truth—which Zola pretended no one else was concerned about—was it here? One never knows, ultimately. An illusion of immediacy, of closeness to reality, rises from the scenes he gives: Gervaise Macquart fighting like a beast, in the laundry, with Virginie, over her man; the restrained but irrepressible humor of the wedding scenes, a lower-class festival, wandering about Paris, in the

Louvre, in the streets, in the rain, under the bridges of the Seine, ending with the gradual debauch of the whole party over the dinner table. Then, among other terrible episodes, there is a sort of Odyssey of the roofer Coupeau with several wolf-like companions, among all the bars and dives of the quarter, in a week of prodigious spreeing. . . . These episodes, deftly conserved for their purpose, mount in combined power, drawing with them an onerous but artfully driven flood of detail, faces, houses, dens, workshops, streets to a dénouement of incredible shame and misery. The debauching of a child in such a fetid environment, the education of a "Nana" from the beginning, through the enfeeblement of family pride or bonds, to ultimate prostitution, is the incendiary touch, a stroke which was evidently unbearable to the generation of romanticism and of "scented and graceful vice." All this is related deliberately, as nearly impersonally, as a Zola could do it, but not as if it were *mere* photography! For there is no lack of force or emphasis, and especially of brutal, abrupt contrasts which take the place of romantic or sentimental pressure.

In this work, "the tone is for mere 'keeping up' unsurpassable; it is a vast steady deep tide on which every object represented is triumphantly borne . . . the high water mark of sincerity, of the *genial,* is unfailingly kept." (I quote Henry James, most unaccountable of Zola's admirers.)

Were it not for his "constant thumping on the bass strings," obviously a short cut to reality of representation, and a decided reflection of a period of too passionate, too partisan, too sightless visioning of the human stuff, *L'Assommoir* would be quite timeless.

How, James asks, all sedentary and scientific, did he get so *near* to things? By what art inscrutable, immeasurable, indefatigable, did he arrange to make of his documents a use so vivified?

But there is a vein of the epic poet in Zola, all longing for the grand scale, which manifesting itself ill in his adolescence, found now a prose speech, powerful and high-colored and rude, harmonized with a form and approach admirably suited to him. No,

the "system" did not always function so well, and it is true that life had cast Zola previously into such a very milieu among this very people. Yet knowing his limitations and his credulity (in science for instance), it is the more apparent that Zola arrived at the "heroic" through the effort of his will toward realizing his own nature.

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He now injected himself into the seething controversy, which made the two years 1877-1879, the period of *L'Assommoir*. He wrote in his own defense for the *Bien Public*. Modern society, in politics as well as letters, he maintained with much polemical craft, revealed two major currents: the idealist and the Naturalist. Seized with his new rôle before the vast public, he distorted the motive of his "hideously superb" novel (shown in the preliminary sketches and original manuscript I have cited, to be that of an objective literary artist with a fatal temperament) and gave as his mission the infusion of "realism" into the social program, as opposed to the "pompous idealism" and hypocrisy of the conservatives and royalists. Thus, "there was nothing solid which did not base itself upon science." The idealists "were simply moving against their century itself." Thus his book was of "social utility." He "had opened the social sores" and if they wanted the moral it was plainly there.

He went on to call attention to the fact that *L'Assommoir* "was part of a vast ensemble," which would be composed, he now admitted, of twenty volumes!

A cycle of twenty Naturalistic novels! And he concluded with some blows in favor of Naturalism: "*without method, without analysis, without truth,* there is no politics, any more than literature, possible to-day."

Brandishing the hot iron, Zola broadened his battle front. His point-blank utterances, allowing no room and no *raison-d'être* for his opponents, were fitted not only to disquiet them but to infuriate them.

Pamphlets rained on Paris: "M. Zola, Pope and Cæsar;" "Papa Cadet;" "Little Treatise on Naturalism." Bigot attacked Zola in the *Revue des Deux Mondes;* and Brunetière wrote that he was "not admissible among the ranks of novelists." Charges flew thick and fast; he was accused of plagiarism, his novel was said to be taken wholly from Denis Poulot's *Le Sublime,* a study of the French working classes. In reality Zola had used this book as a document, along with many others, often borrowing somewhat freely, but always perfecting the mediocre material. Léon Hennique, then only twenty-five, gave an enthusiastic lecture on *L'Assommoir* on the Boulevards. He was ostracized by the Parnassians, but was soon taken under the wing of Zola. The final touch was added when Zola was suddenly accused of "treason" in the *Figaro.*

For some time he had been corresponding with the "Messenger of Europe" (St. Petersburg), and one of his last articles, called "The Contemporary Novelists" had passed in review the whole school of French writers, from Octave Feuillet, Edmond About, Erckmann-Chatrian, Victor Cherbuliez, Jules Claretie down to Jules Verne. He had not been very gentle with the descendants of George Sand and Musset, and time has borne him out. But the *Figaro* with its scent for scandal, accused him of having made revelations regarding their sales which were not ethical, of having attacked only the authors of Calmann-Lévy, while those of his own publisher (Flaubert, Goncourt and Daudet), were praised. He had struck a terrible blow against French literature abroad, and done it behind the backs of his opponents, where they could not defend themselves. Finally it was intimated that he had probably been bribed by Charpentier with a payment of 10,000 francs.

Zola expended a great deal of energy in defensive retorts. He offered his manuscript in complete form to the *Figaro* in order to show that he had been misinterpreted. This was inserted, and the brawl continued. "Well, who has the right to be frank about such things, if not I, who have always been treated brutally," he

shouted. "And I know the cause of all this anger; it is because I say aloud what many others only whisper about."

If these journalistic combats appear trivial to us now, they demonstrated at least an energetic, obstinate, aggressive personality, which endeared itself to his younger companions-in-letters, Huysmans, Maupassant, Céard, Alexis, Hennique. These men often joined him in his polemics now with humor and dash.

Week after week, he conducted a great campaign not merely for himself but for "Naturalism." The "winds of insurrection which he stirred up," Céard observes, "were largely for the profit of his friends, who were astonished at the brutal and prolonged echo of rage in the press."

In view of the battle being publicly waged, a battle which must have delighted the young men of letters already attached to Zola's simultaneously artistic and militant character, the group of five whom I have already mentioned decided to give a dinner of homage to the young master. It is honorable to recall that they had gathered about him the year before, early in 1876, when his celebrity had not at all attained such scandalous proportions. Now, the dinner which took place at Trapp's at the angle of the rue Saint-Lazare and the Passage du Havre, on Monday, the 16th of April, 1877, was an event of high interest, since it was on this occasion that the group conceived most probably the desire to assert itself by a common manifestation. To the five, Maupassant (the moving spirit of the dinner), Huysmans, Céard, Alexis, Hennique, was added a sixth, Octave Mirbeau, on whom it has also pleased Providence to bestow notoriety. Maupassant, the "spiritual son of Flaubert" had gotten both his illustrious mentor and Edmond de Goncourt to join them. This latter it must be noted was not completely jovial on this occasion; so much unstinted homage for his confrère did not ravish him. He was thinking doubtless of

how much he and his brother Jules were responsible for the Naturalist élan.

Yet the dinner was gay. And at a given stage, Zola and Flaubert were in their shirt-sleeves, with reddened faces, consuming food in the most realistic manner. Ah, it was to be a "holy union" against "bourgeoisdom" and against all the banal conventions of chauvinism, piety, and social hypocrisy! . . .

The newspapers did not fail to signal the event, and one literary journal (*République des Lettres*) gave a fantastic account of the menu:

Potage purée "Bovary"
Truite Saumonée à la "fille Elisa"
Poularde truffée à la "Saint-Antoine"
Parfait "naturaliste"
Vin de "Coupeau"
Liqueur de "L'Assommoir."

The reviews and journals rallied these five unknowns who had the pretention of founding a school. Cartoons appeared showing Zola, with his snub nose, mounted on a sow and followed by a procession of suckling pigs. There were references to "the tail of Zola." It was Zola, however, with his personal bravoura and his blunt way of uttering his opinions or retorts, who bore the brunt of the satire and excess of irony in the press.

The new school, they said, "spreads like a stain of oil, and every day the tail behind the master grows thicker and longer!"

Every week, Zola pursued his propaganda in the *Bien Public* or the *Voltaire*, journals which were open to his "doctrines." His friend Henry Céard had pointed out to him the work of Doctor Claude Bernard, who then headed the movement of experimental medicine and science. His ideas Zola found of great and opportune utility, needing merely "adaptation" for the sphere of the novel, in order to complete his program for "scientific literature." Medicine, hitherto an art, could not become a science, Bernard main-

tained, unless it subjected itself to the procedure of experimentation like physics and chemistry. He made a powerful case for hypotheses which were arrived at through exact observation and experiment by the objective and open-minded scientist. These ideas, novel at the period, made union with the contemporary fetichism for science, which under the strokes of a Pasteur and a Berthelot, had aroused extravagant hopes in the intellectual public. Berthelot, the famous chemist, had even asserted that "science possesses a moral force capable of aiding society to attain with but a brief delay the blessed age of equality and fraternity. . . ." Science united with the Republic would prepare for the Better Humanity!

And so Zola likewise, in a polemical essay which aroused a storm, "The Experimental Novel": "we see that the novelist is made up of an observer and an experimenter. The observer gives the facts just as he has observed them, establishes the solid ground on which the characters and events move; then the experimenter appears and institutes experiments, that is, makes his characters move in a particular story, in order to show that the succession of facts would be such as is required by the determinism of the things studied." In other words, the influence of social environment, of heredity, of the time or social condition, in a Naturalistic novel must play a perfectly inevitable part in determining the course of events. Having chosen his personages, scenes and period, the "scientific novelist" was simply a passive instrument who revealed the cog-wheels of nature and man, a business of helping the procedure of life by knowing the "truth" about it!

Thus for all the dreadful things that happened and were to happen in the novels of the Naturalist school, Zola and the others, were sorry! but they were quite, quite helpless! These things had to come about, and we were all the better for knowing them.

Brunetière, himself a great believer in science, pointed out the contradictions in Zola's "doctrines." There was really no experimentation, he said; there was only "observation"; in order to

"experiment on a character like Coupeau, you would have to keep him locked up in your cellar, send him out for a walk with a nurse, and feed him stated doses of alcohol, at stated intervals." *

However, it was in an essay in the public press, styled "The Republic and Literature" that Zola went to the most extravagant limits in spreading his "doctrines." In politics, as in literature, he had already said, there were two attitudes, that of the "idealists" who were conservative, and the "Naturalistic" (i.e. scientific) attitude which based its program on exact, truthful, unshrinking observation of nature and man. Thus the only republic which could survive (and in the decade following 1870, there was much question of its survival) would be a Naturalistic republic. Likewise, the literature of the Republic, par excellence, must be that of Naturalism. Zola was the plain spokesman for the new age. "The life of the Republic depends upon whether it follows our methods."

What a curious aspect of the time and the militant novelist these documents give us! Did Zola himself realize the folly and fatuousness of such utterances? It appeared that he did, and that there was a purpose in his madness.

Flaubert himself had become restive and uncomfortable under these professions of faith into which he often found his name dragged and which he was far from sharing. He decided, with some temper, that he did not wish to belong to the Naturalistic Republic.

One day, in a gathering with Zola, Daudet and Goncourt, he attacked Zola's campaigns, "always, of course, with sweeping doffings of the hat to his friend's talent." What did he mean by all this farce about the experimental novel, of which Balzac and he

* Henry Céard, the friend of Zola's later years, vowed that he called the novelist's attention to the ideas of Claude Bernard, for the first time in 1876! Bernard's doctrines seem absolutely essential to the formulas which Zola evolved between 1877 and 1881. Yet *L'Assommoir* and other most "Naturalistic" novels had been created before this time. These works were by no means built up out of "whole-cloth." They were imagined and written first; the "campaigns for Naturalism" came second, born no doubt of the complacent notion of making a literary religion of his personal tastes. Thus Claude Bernard was adopted and pressed into the "system." Very important, as we shall see.

himself were said to be the precursors, and what in the world, above all, by the "Naturalistic Republic?" As for him, these journalistic crusades sickened him; the Republic sickened him; science sickened him. . . .

"You," Zola replied, "have a small fortune which permits you to be free to do anything you please, frees you from many necessities. . . . I have been obliged to gain my living absolutely by my pen; I have been put to all sorts of shifts, reduced to the most abominable commissions.

"*And by Jove, I say the devil with Naturalism* (!) like you; and yet I shall repeat those ideas and go on repeating them, because new things must be baptized before the public, so that they may think them new. . . .

"I divide my work into two parts," he went on to confess, "there is the work by which I am judged and wish to be judged, and there are my articles in the papers, in Russia, my correspondence, all of which means nothing to me, which I reject, and which I only design in order to smooth the way for my books.

"First I place a nail, and then with a stroke of the hammer, I drive this nail an inch into the brain of the public; then with another stroke I make it go another inch. And my hammer is journalism which I simply let play all around my books. . . ."

He fought through the long years for his doctrines and his school, while knowing the vanity, the vulnerability of them; "thus resembling," as Céard observes, "one of those apostles of Renan's books, who die for a faith of whose illusory character they have long been undeceived."

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Zola's character was changing in a marked way, under the complete transformation of his station. In him there had always been two poles: the bourgeois who longed to enjoy power and success, who, it was said, thought of literature "in terms of big pennies," and the revolutionary. At this period, the bourgeois triumphed; he triumphs even in the now portly profile.

He moved to new quarters in 1877, 23 rue de Ballu (now rue de Boulogne), on the third floor of an extremely proper apartment house in an extremely respectable quarter. He lived here for many years, the payment of quarterly rentals presenting no further problems.

As Balzac observed, in nearly every bourgeois, once he has arrived, a passion for antiques is born. Zola and his wife combed Paris for bits of tapestry, ancient vases, stained glass, furniture of every conceivable period.

"These old things are better," he would say to Alexis, and would add, "beside, they are really cheaper. . . ."

Zola's study at the rue de Boulogne, after the period of *L'Assommoir,* is described by a contemporary:

". . . A large room into which the light penetrates with difficulty. The big windows are reduced to small dimensions by the use of broad *Bonne-Grace* window-hangings of blue plush on which flower-embroideries cut out from antique Italian chasubles are sewn. Curtains of white lace and double curtains of red crêpe-de-Chine increase the dimness of the room and render it severe and lugubrious. The *cabinet de travail* is furnished with objects from every epoch, every style, every country. The work-table of Dutch origin, heavy and massive, dates from Louis XIII; the huge writing chair of solid rose-wood, dates from Louis XIV, and came up from Portugal. There were two small bookcases of the Louis XVI period, a little Louis XV table, a piano, and two magnificent Persian vases, containing bunches of lilac. Above one of the doors is a kind of scallop from an Italian altar-hanging, embroidered with Venetian beads, dating from the seventeenth century. There are numerous pictures on the wall, for the most part of the impressionistic school, including the famous portrait of Zola by Manet, and landscapes by Cézanne, Monet and Pissarro.

"The bedroom is most curious of all. The walls are hung with antique tapestries from the Château d'Amboise. The windows are

of stained glass of different periods ranging from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries. Between the two windows is a huge coffer of carved wrought iron. There is an antique Breton cupboard, some superb Majolica pottery, and a tall and massive bed of the Louis XIII period ornamented with hangings made from chasubles in Genoese velvet. . . ."

When Flaubert was conducted by the gleeful Zola into this extraordinary bedroom, he sat down on the great Louis XIII bed, and stared about him with his great wondering child's eyes, ravished. He thought of one of his romantic tales of the Middle Ages.

"Why, it is the bed-room of my *'Saint-Julien the Hospitaler'!*" he whispered rapturously.

With a newly developed passion for *chinoiseries* Zola gathered hundreds of these things, and placed them all about his home, always keeping them, for all their profusion, in perfect order and becoming deeply irritated when a maid disturbed them.

In the elaborate gloom of his study he continued to build up the hordes of the *Rougon-Macquart*, going out seldom, seeing little of the world, save his friends, and living a retired life.

He was now working over *Une Page d'Amour*, a "pure book," very pale and very delicate alongside of *L'Assommoir*. "I wish to surprise the readers of *L'Assommoir* with a book that is *bonhomme*," he wrote to Huysmans. Always the circus tactics of Villemessant. Its chief value to him remained the descriptions of Paris. It worried him; he was afraid that its success would be extremely moderate in comparison with his last book.

One of the few salons, perhaps the only one that Zola visited at this time was that of Mme. Charpentier. In Georges Charpentier, he had long ago found a great friend, a man of integrity, courage and yet of a very Parisian charm. He was more than a publisher, and the men of letters of the time liked to frequent his shop. The rôle of Mme. Charpentier was perhaps even

more important; a charming woman, she put herself to pains in order to please Zola, "with that grace and that impetuous goodness which inspired all her acts." The idea came to her of forming a salon during the hey-day of the Naturalists whom her husband published. She encountered a rare social success, for she played her complex and insinuating part in the grand old style; Goncourt in the "Journal" signals the beginning of her salon, in 1877, as an event. The mission was to "gather persons of opposing faiths, of every walk of life, who esteemed each other." For some twenty years this salon virtually dominated the intellectual life of France. The amusing and frivolous, the beautiful and idle, the mighty even like Gambetta and Clemenceau came.

At first the success of the salon, it must be said, was assured by the fact that the world came to see "the terrible Zola . . . the bear."

The author of *Le Ventre de Paris* and *L'Assommoir* lacked completely what is known as the "Parisian spirit." He was incapable of repartee; his brutal polemics had engendered so many enemies, many of them possessed of deadly if superficial wit, that he at heart greatly feared situations that might arise. An aphorism, a paradox, merely aroused a blunt protest in him: "But I don't understand! What do you mean by all that, my dear fellow?"

Yet he adored Mme. Charpentier, in the depths of his crude and timid person, as one adores *"une princesse lointaine."* He felt himself at ease here, in an atmosphere of admiration, sympathy, and even gratitude.

He was king in this household, albeit a shy king.*

"I still see Zola," recalls one of the habitual guests, "silent at first, his face melancholy and drawn in a frown, then gradually becoming animated as the conversation warmed up, and soon

* The publishing house of Charpentier had undergone a difficult period toward 1875-1876. It had undertaken onerous expenses in moving to larger quarters, new ventures, etc. . . . The unexpected success of Zola is admitted to have saved the firm, now one of the oldest in France.

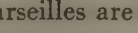
pouring out all the ardor and the fever which devoured him. He was the king of this household, a king at once timid and convinced of his own force, good-fellow and yet proud. I still see the large wrinkles in his brow, his reflective gaze, and still hear the sound of his voice, hesitant and passionate."

In the summer of 1877, the Zolas had gone to Estaque, the lovely gleaming beach resort near Marseilles on the Mediterranean. Zola joyed in the great heat, which at moments turned the country into a furnace. The change in his station is marked. His countrymen greet him heartily. He "escapes from the menace of a banquet at Marseilles." And finally it had become necessary, "to prohibit my friends from revealing my retreat. The worst of it is that the newspapers of Marseilles are talking. I have had to put up with several visits already. . . ."

The sea is warm. The temperature rises to well above 100. Zola takes prolonged baths in the sea. Not a drop of rain falls for three months. "I ended by brandishing my fist in rage at this implacably blue sky," he writes. Memories of his childhood return. "We eat magnificent fruit, and heaps of vile things which I adore, but of which I am getting to be a little afraid, since they have already made me sick."

Zola rich, abandons himself to gourmandise. He writes to "my good friend Flaubert. . . . Shellfish, my friend, *bouillabaisse,* a nutriment of God's thunder, which breathes fire into my body. . . I have had to take to my bed for several days. . . ."

Had not Emile Zola written superb pages of hunger?



In this moment of power, his old frustrated love for the theater flared up. He had written a comedy, *Bouton de Rose,* the year before, on request, in the humble posture of one seeking to entertain the public. Surely they would laugh at the gross little jests of his gross little bourgeois. It was necessarily about a "cuckolding." He was also busied now with the translation of

L'Assommoir into play form, this, an important business project, executed by a veteran play-concocter, William Busnach. During the rage for *L'Assommoir*, there was no question of its success, and there was too much at stake to permit chances to be taken.

In November, Zola was back in Paris. He hesitated about having *Bouton de Rose*, previously refused as inadequate, put on. Flaubert had modestly withdrawn his last dramatic effort, upon the advice of his friends. But could Zola fail now? The controversy over *L'Assommoir* raged unabatedly. Finally, in his passion for conquering the theater and overborne by his own *amour propre*, he consented to have it staged. Early in May the cast was selected; all his friends were invited, Goncourt, Daudet, the "five disciples," the painters. Flaubert stayed alone in the country working. Mme. Zola ordered a banquet for them and the players at Véfour's.

It was a disaster.

"The public was kind to the first act, angry during the second, hissed the third, which it did not permit to be finished," related Goncourt. Mme. Zola wept bitterly; Emile Zola was fearfully stricken in his pride.

In the wings, Zola could be distinguished expostulating with the directors, after the stormy termination of the third act:

"But you see, gentlemen, you were wrong to present this play against my wishes!"

Infantile, petulant outburst, which the boulevards mocked at him for, long years after. What overweening vanity! exclaimed the gossipers. How could a play be produced against its author's wishes?

At the ghastly banquet, one of the strangest scenes of Zola's life, Mme. Zola with reddened eyes struggled for her composure and occupied herself with ordering the dinner. Zola, stranger to the steady and subdued talk about him, his "pale brow bent over his plate, mechanically turned his knife in his hand, the blade in the air." The darkest thoughts teemed in his head. It was the critics who were against him. What a ferocious uprising of the mob

against his play! All his enemies, "all the people had come to see it, doubtless, as they come to the cage of an animal tamer, with the secret desire of seeing him devoured." Ah, he had so many enemies! "The public,—bah!—what was the good of flattering it? It was a wild beast that responded to caresses with bites . . . Better to show it your teeth." From time to time, his friends recalled, a sentence would escape, which seemed to have no connection with anything at all . . . Suddenly the fearful thought came, in his habitual pessimism, that it was all a house of cards, that his success was a thing of the moment, and this power and domination of yesterday, would be over. This wealth, this ease. . . . He stole a glance about the table. No, he would overcome this. He would go back to his novels, and do one that would be a veritable massacre! The *Nana*, the ruined girl of the family in *L'Assommoir*. . . . the life of a whore in Paris, all Paris kneeling before this gigantic, vile, golden Venus! . . . The words escaped involuntarily from his parched lips.

"It is all the same to me. . . . No it is stupid, this failure in the theater," they heard him mumble. "It changes the whole order of my work. The other things will have to wait . . . I shall have to do *Nana* now . . ."

CHAPTER XI

ZOLA FAT: THE SOIREES OF MEDAN

"If I have made myself heard in the turmoil of modern times, it is because I have been sincere and passionate. . . ."

ONE laughs at the Zola of the prosperous years, one collects his crudities, one circles him, gloating over large surfaces exposed to assault; yet he remains a force, a mass, an energy, a monument of impermeable flesh. For years the process continues of his "swallowing and straddling his time." Soon the triumph of Naturalism is complete; the Coppées, the Richepins, the Goncourts even subject themselves. The idea of unshrinking, unswerving observation dominates literature up to our very day, perfects the novel, even kills the novel . . . New terrain is conquered; the very material calls forth a new language.

A reverse in the theater which for the moment may have shaken his spirit, did not restrain him long.

He rears himself and faces the enemy, and resumes his smashing, swashbuckling, circus tactics. One sees the strength in his person, as did Henry James, "in his character, his will, his passion, his fighting temper, his aggressive lips, his squared shoulders (when he sat up) and his overweening confidence."

Thus the legend arose among the public of a Zola who was

brutal and loud-mouthed, since he considered the public an enemy whom he made love to with a whip, and bothered little about the niceties and the *bon mots* which the Parisian spirit adored. The theory of his action, and of the "façade" he assumed, is amply revealed to his friends:

"One gets nowhere here without making a noise. One must be discussed, maltreated, aroused by the boiling of hostile anger. The Parisian never understands a book unless it has been dinned into his ears, unless it has become a topic for the newspapers. Paris is an ocean, but an ocean in which calm ruins you and tempest saves you. How can one shake the indifference of this enormous city concerned only in piling up gold and spending it? She listens to nothing but roaring and cannonading. Unfortunate are they who are wanting in courage!"

The plays which the public had scorned, he now published in book form, preceded by a preface that is rich with such pride and belligerency.

"Here are the facts (Preface to 'Plays,' 1878). When I began to write my novels, there was a similar violence manifested against them by the public and the press. For ten years, they treated me as a pariah, conceded me not the slightest talent, and not the least honesty. *I contented myself with smiling; I felt that I was the stronger one,* because I was working, and I knew clearly where I wanted to go. You cannot kill a book. You can try to bury it through silence or scandal, but still it is resuscitated in its time.

"Unfortunately it is different in the theater, when you wish to bring to it new ideas. . . . A mob, a whole hall of 1,500 or 2,000 spectators, can shout you down and silence you brutally. One can do nothing but yield to force. The only protest possible is to publish the plays and wait.

"These are three; the first three soldiers of an army. When they are twenty, they will be respected. What I await is an evolution in our drama. I have much stubbornness and much patience.

They have ended by reading my novels. They will end by reading my plays!"

Quantity and size, observe, are factors in triumphing over a time and a public.

But for many of us, the tone of such manifestoes extraordinarily charged with pride, loneliness, conviction and strength preserves a rare literary quality. It is particularly an effect of the modern world, with its sense of blind mobs, of millions, of machines, of chaotic sounds and voices. One finds such an accent again in the poems of Arthur Rimbaud, in the mad Lautréamont, in Apollinaire during the World War, and in the most infuriated Dadaists. It can be the only satisfying response to the opposition of the multitude: the day of the esthetic cenobite, withdrawn from the crowds, his regard plunged and drowned in the crystal ball of his art, is over. We have the excited, ferocious, even absurd Zola, thrilled by the frenzy he evokes.

Would he become softened by the fineness of his table, the comfort of his town home, the adulation of his partisans?

No. The failure of his play has "made him younger," he exclaims at Goncourt's. "It has given me twenty years of life. The success of *L'Assommoir* had softened me. But when I think of the whole train of novels I am manufacturing, I feel that only the state of struggle and anger can encourage me to go on and finish them."

In the spring of 1878, loaded with cash, Zola had conceived the idea of securing a country home. He had traveled about in a carriage with his wife, along the Seine valley, and in a great bend of the river, about twenty-five miles from Paris, he had observed a tiny farm-house, "hidden in a nest of verdure and separated from the rest of the hamlet of Médan by a magnificent line of trees." He had bought this for nine thousand francs. "Literature has paid for this modest rustic asylum," as he wrote to Flaubert, August 9, 1878, "which has the merit of being far from any rail-

road station and of not having a single bourgeois in its vicinity. I am alone, absolutely alone; for a month I have not seen a human face. Only, my installation has upset me a good deal, hence my neglect in writing you. . . ."

Indeed the installation had been prodigious. "Some weeks after he moved in," relates Alexis, "the masons came, then the upholsterers, the painters, etc. They have never left it since.* After they had repaired the little house (with its garden no bigger than a pocket handkerchief), Zola had made them add a new one, a big one to it, suited to his professional requirements. The second house was tenfold the original building in cost." For his study, Zola created an immense room, as large and high as a whole house, whose windows overlooked the river. His garden became vast and lavish. Opposite him was a sizeable little island, laden with trees. He bought the island . . .

His life had become methodical. At nine every morning he gained his study, this vast room, fifteen feet high and thirty square. Here he had installed an immense, antique writing table of carved oak, and a great chair. The room was furnished and draped in that baroque and lavish style whose mood recalled the earliest and most romantic Zola. At one end was a huge fireplace, where in letters of gold was carved the motto:

NULLA DIES SINE LINEA.

At the other end was a kind of alcove, with a divan, severe and gloomy in its decoration, which formed a spacious den. Opposite was the great bay-window fronting the river. And above the alcove was a gallery lined with books, reached by a spiral staircase which also led out to a terrace covering the whole top of the house, whence a magnificent view of the whole surrounding country. In this restful and secluded villa, "not too near and not too far" from Paris, he came to spend eight or nine months of the year.

* Paul Alexis: Emile Zola, Notes d'un Ami. 1882.

He never ceased adding to his house and stables.

"I like to play the engineer," he would say, "like my father."

Romanticism dominated his whole interior. There were windows filled with heraldic stained glass, Louis XVI furniture, Indian buddhas, Venetian chests, silk-upholstered modern chairs, objects of art and of glass of every kind, all in profusion, but preserved in fixed order. Flowers of every conceivable species and from every land, brimmed out of huge Dutch and Sèvres vases, and bloomed profusely in the garden with their wild hash of strong color and perfume.

In the great stables, there were the horses, the cows, the pet-animals. And wonderful to relate! there was a little gallery, traversing the stable, with a peep-hole through which the proprietor could peer at his animal world and scrutinize all its moods and functions, without disturbing them.

From time to time, towers were appended to the house; each, the wits used to say, the fruit of some new public success; viz.: the "Nana Tower," the "Germinal Tower" the "Joy of Living Tower." . . .

From this refuge, nourished and shaped by his most vulgar and his most charming traits, Zola watched the literary battlefront in Paris.

"I am seized with the desire at times, never to return to Paris," he tells Flaubert, "so tranquil am I in my desert. I have never seen things more clearly. I am very satisfied with the progress of my novel. . . ."

To the editor of the newspaper (*Le Voltaire*), which now adopted him, he wrote concerning attacks by Catulle Mendès and others, "I authorize you freely to insert all attacks upon us."

Une Page d'Amour, the book with which Zola had declared "I shall make all Paris weep," had appeared, greeted by only a mild storm, mostly of tempered applause, although certain stout enemies, instead of being astonished by the book's "sweetness" intimated that "the bear was losing his claws."

Thus he was engaged now upon *Nana* which would astonish the readers of *Une Page d'Amour*.

L'Assommoir was being prepared for the stage, and he wrote to his younger friends, Céard, Hennique, to prepare for a struggle with the public. "So much the better if there is to be a battle. I am ready for anything." It was a roaring hit.

He had ordered no banquet, on this occasion; he had even stayed out of the hall, fearful lest "his worried and desolate countenance discourage the actors." At the end, his interrogatory nose appeared through the door leading to the wings, inquiring whether it had really been a success.

Chabrillat, the celebrated actor, had ordered a gay dinner at Brébant's. Every one was happy. "The prefect of police would be told to go to h——if he bothered the play."

"But you, Emile, you should have ordered the dinner," exclaimed Alexandrine reproachfully.

"I was superstitious," he laughed. "I am sure the play would have failed if I had ordered one in advance."

Zola's system of preparing and writing his novels became one of the wonders of his time, and *Nana* is most characteristic of the limitations as well as the power of such a method.

Inspiration or imagination, in accordance with his philosophy, played, he liked to think, a small part. "I cannot invent facts," he would say. "I absolutely lack the faculty for inventing plots or stories." He would always start from some general idea, in imagining a novel; a social situation or class, a struggle, a group of individuals. Having chosen the temperament, the Rougon or Macquart he desired "to experiment upon" next, he would involve himself in a mass of documents, books, newspaper-clippings and even field expeditions, as I have shown, in connection with the social level or group he was picturing. For such work Zola had an extraordinary power of assimilation. "I am patient," he would say, "I work with the placidity of an old compiler, taking pleas-

ure in the most material occupations in connection with my books." It was said of him by his associates that when he was writing a book about working people he had no ears for anything else; if you spoke about bourgeois, he would seem very distracted as if he did not understand what you could be talking about. Thus, while investigating demi-mondaines he had completely forgotten all about workingmen and was oblivious to them. As in everything else, he worked with a certitude that he was arriving at the truth in this manner, that he was in short "being a scientist." By virtually drowning himself in evidence and documents, by talking to and questioning all his friends and acquaintances, in letters and conversations, he would indeed accumulate a mass of likely material. Was it complete? No. "I have no need of seeing all," he said. "An aspect suffices; I divine the rest. That is where genius lies." Genius, then! Not science. To gather all the works that had been written about courtesans like "Nana," for instance, to investigate all the "Nanas" of Paris, was impossible. And, the opponents of Naturalism added, he was not only selecting whichever subject he pleased, but selecting his ground and the kind of "experiments" he wished them to undergo, and, like a little deus ex machina, terminating the "experiments" in any way that appealed to him. Science, indeed! Monsieur Zola's critical propaganda was pure balderdash!

Yet the revelations of two intimates, Goncourt and Céard, indicate clearly that while Zola's public theorizing about Naturalism may have been a subterfuge, the atmosphere and methods of science which he adhered to were an intrinsic part of his faith and his temperament. As much so, and no more coxcombish, than Lamartine's standing before the lake at Aix-les-Bains and composing his "Meditations," the terrain even being exploited by realty speculators a century later on the grounds of its "inspirational" qualities.

"Whatever modes may come, it is always rhetoric that rules," Flaubert had said. And it is true of Zola and his school that the

NANA

"Say, Emile, When You Are in the Academy, Don't Forget to Give Them My Address . . ."—J. L. FORAIN.

attitude of cold-bloodedness and joy over naïve or filthy episodes, aided them in shaping a new and vigorous language, after the rhetorical exhaustion of the romantics.

There is another and more hilarious factor in Zola's method. "I am very sedentary," Zola used to say to people who wondered at his unflagging energy and interest in a work that apparently chained him to his desk for a quarter of a century! "Without pen and ink, I am good for nothing."

And knowing the man-of-action, the thirster for power, imbedded in Zola, it is all the more pathetic to consider the dreary, shut-in, interminable labor of this long train of five to eight-hundred page tomes.

The true picture, however, is vastly different.

Emile Zola, determined to write the story of *Nana*, the gutter offspring of *L'Assommoir*, would put on his hat, take his pencil and notebook and sortie out to the region of the Parc Monceau where the most fashionable demi-mondaines were "kept" by their deluded sustainers. He had been introduced, for instance, by Ludovic Halévy, the librettist, and by the very mundane Edmond de Goncourt, to La Païva, one of the Phrynés of the Second Empire, who was now sagely living in her mansion upon the dividends of her beauty and passion.

Thus, despite his supposed "fear of women," and the qualms of his wife, the tenacious Naturalist, elegantly dressed, rather vain about his patent-leather shoes, would set out to have lunch with a lady who had abandoned her tailor-husband in Moscow, fascinated and ruined a member of an English ducal house, induced noblemen and bankers to commit suicide or defalcate, and surrounded herself at the close of her career with the men of letters, the artists, the wits, of the Second Empire.

The lady, still well-preserved, discourses charmingly to the novelist of her career, her exploits, her triumphs. Notebook in hand, he visits her house from top to bottom, writes down details, makes observations of plans, draws sketches even. One does

not permit oneself to imagine that the great novelist became frivolous in any way, or ruddy over the wine. One thinks of him only as with knitted brow, and heavily lisping speech, he inquired:

". . . And so the Comte de la Falaise forced his daughter to marry the man you had selected for her, and who had formerly been your—er—your—friend. And the younger of the two jealous brothers who committed suicide in this very boudoir, he was only seventeen, you say . . . And with a razor! . . ."

These field expeditions in which Zola, far from sedentary, diverted or exercised himself in a hundred delightful ways and acquitted himself so honorably, became notorious and gained a certain orthodox prestige for his method, so that even his extremely jealous and emotional wife ended by tolerating them, as a sacrifice to art, or science, if you will.

Not always were they as easily gotten out of. It is conceivable that in visiting houses of ill-repute such as he was often wont to describe, Zola would find it best to conquer the diffidence of the madame through a bank-note, and once in the citadel would find it difficult to convince his subjects of the objectiveness of his motives, and of how unbending he could be toward frivolity. Thus Zola was compelled to prowl into a thousand dank or garish hallways, nose about the green-rooms of theaters, peer through keyholes on actresses and prostitutes, listen to old viveurs and rakes, attend the races, all in the rôle of a chaste, honorable, myopic, middle-aged and scientific novelist.

Thus he learned how his "Nana" would pass her days, how she and her companions made love, their manners at the table, their attitude toward servants and creditors, the mister who pays, and the young scamp who is truly loved, gratis. His friends, too, supplied him with facts; Alexis, Céard and Huysmans, they were not Naturalists for nothing! And Alexis in fact, due to his literary persuasions, had long specialized in the most malodorous and half-world dives of Paris and Marseilles. His documentation was voluminous, however weak his science may have been, for in later

years, poor Alexis, too faithful and too literal follower that he was, had to be rescued from many a scrape by the Zolas, and the responsibility for his wife and children often disturbed the head of the school. It was Alexis who acquainted Zola with that evil and wilful demoness who is Nana's extraordinary companion or mentor in vice, the most vivid characterization of the book. And again Céard and Maupassant related the incident of a whole crowd of youths fresh from a party of their own, breaking into another one and demoralizing it by their unexpected slum-visit and their little pranks, like spilling bottles of champagne into the piano in order to baptize it. There was a gay and toothless old gentleman whom he met at Flaubert's, whom Zola filled with wine at the Café Anglais while listening to recitals of brilliant conquests and of lost fortunes, or the description of how various doors and outlet rooms connected with certain salons and boudoirs.

"These were veritable flowers of vice which we brought him," says Paul Alexis, "or which he harvested himself on all sides. But he did not sip them indiscriminately as the bee sips nectar. He would be logical, and *reject episodes offered if they had no reason.*"

One sees him vividly even in such a spleenful note as this of Léon Daudet's:

"He had himself invited to soirées of rich capitalists, with the purpose of documenting himself. One could observe him, replete and somber, such a whole-cloth philosopher, in a corner by the buffet, examining those present, furnishing his coarsening memory with clipped and rapid silhouettes which his morbid imagination associated promptly with orgies of flesh and blood. All around him people murmured:

" 'It is Zola. He is here to take notes.' "

The extraordinary adventures into which Zola was led, the manner in which those warned of his purpose wilfully *misled* or mocked him forms an extraordinary chapter of his life, which fortunately has no sequel of scandal or serious misfortune. More

than once he subjected himself if not to danger, at least to distasteful episodes, the menace of blackmail. One such case was still being echoed in the records of a canonical trial as late as 1927. . . . But too frequently, and above all in the period of his

ZOLA HAS HIMSELF RUN OVER

On the Rue de Rivoli, in Order to Describe Faithfully the Sensations of Such an Accident in his Forthcoming Novel, "Paris."—*Gil Baer, le Supplément, 1897.*

great fame, Zola was plainly the dupe of his own methods, his informants coloring their narratives, distorting their statements, relating anything (like a palmist) which they saw clearly they would be rewarded for in literary immortality or in bank-notes. Of this later . . .

Thus the cardinal principle of Naturalism, truthful, detached observation, was born in sin. The tracts upon the life of the nineteenth century, are impressive, learned, often very illuminating, but they are seldom *accurate*. Zola's are teeming with errors and contradictions, and they are always much more astounding and *picturesque*, above all, than accurate.

It is nevertheless quite wonderful to behold how Zola gives the sense of reality, even when he knows little about a subject. It indicates to us only the triumph of intuition, of a type of genius, despite the sterile method. Thus, Zola writes to Flaubert that he is rushing off to see the races at Maisons-Laffitte, something he has never witnessed before. The corresponding scene in *Nana* is extraordinary for its evocation of such an event, in all its color and sound. In its old-fashioned nineteenth century manner the description is masterful, and the scene is made *vital through its relation with the action*. It came to be noted here how peculiarly Zola's talent was to paint great crowds in motion with a panoramic sweep that may still be envied. The scene of the Grand Prix is topped with one of his typically melodramatic episodes: the horse "Nana," named after the owner's mistress, winning, is acclaimed in the roar of a hundred-thousand throats. Thus it is Nana, the scarlet woman, the golden Venus, that all of elegant and pleasure-ridden Paris salutes in its mammoth voice.

Another extraordinary scene of the movement and tumult of a crowd, is based, on the other hand, on something Zola had really known and heard. In his youth, reduced to one of the lowest *hotels borgnes* of the Latin Quarter he had once been terrified by the nocturnal raid of police upon the house. . . . "Their frightened wail arose like the clamor of trapped animals . . ." A whole chapter of such sinister movements is transposed into *Nana*.

Nana is not the best of the Rougon-Macquarts, but it is the one in which the choice of subject most betrays the method, in which the foibles, the myths of this method are most exposed. The model is easily followed, and has been, as we know, vastly imi-

tated. *Nana* like most books about courtesans up to 1920, is extremely "moral," in fact quite unctious. The angry exclamations aroused by the book were easily countered. "He bathes himself in the gutter with delight, and considers the rest of us who prefer other ablutions as infamous, hypocrites and scoundrels," says a commentator who is gifted with indignation, and whose father wrote about courtesans also, albeit with far more honey and less crude boldness.

But the gesture of writing a book like *Nana* and hurling it at the public, at Paris, with its good taste, its wits, its desire to preserve the decencies, that is extraordinary! Those who know France know how insulting, how abominable, how infuriating such a book could seem to vast numbers of its people. Here is the stubborn Zola measuring his power to enrage the public, enjoying the hubbub from the quiet of Médan. If the "vile, pornographic" Zola invoked gain from such a book, he invoked no less the hatred and passions it stimulated.

To have been imitated widely was not the least agreeable manifestation of his power. Having probed this "social sore" Zola could go on to a hundred others, abandoning such a fruitful subject for others, whom its obvious yield fascinated . . . Goncourt, for instance, noting the success of *Nana*, could not forget that his brother Jules and he had first written in *Germinie Lacerteux* a Naturalistic novel of the hysterical love affair of a servant-maid with the son of a creamery proprietress. From now on, comments Doumic, a bitter observer of this period of literature, he was jealous of all in the new school that might have been borrowed from their novel. "And then what happened to him, happens often to those who wish to lead a movement. This head of a school went to school with his disciples. He would not permit them to surpass him in brutality or violence. He wrote *La Fille Elisa*. . . ."

A new editor had taken up the *Voltaire* which published *Nana*

serially, and planned to revive the declining fortunes of the journal through this feature. He plastered Paris with bill-boards, and sent sandwichmen throughout the crowded portions of the city with placards in huge type:

READ NANA!
READ NANA!

With the book only half-written, hundreds of letters poured in to Médan. The quiet retreat was invaded with the noise of the outside world. Numerous comments appeared in the press, and many zealous individuals, desirous of vaunting their superior knowledge of this profession, pestered Zola with corrections and advice. He was to no small extent rendered miserable by this disturbance: yet he clung grimly to his work, doing his thousand words a day without fail after breakfast. He was glad to be through. Each book was a new cross for him, under which he groaned to his friends and his wife. From now on he worked in the glare of notoriety. There was little tranquillity for him; he became inured to a life of danger, one might say, of risks, thrusts, blows, cries. *Nana* appeared in book-form, early in 1880, and moved triumphantly toward its first hundred thousand. . . .

The receptions of Thursday continued at the rue de Boulogne. Zola, who was a considerate and gracious host, full of raillery and *bonhomie,* received his younger literary friends: Huysmans, with his face of "a friendly vulture"; Céard, thin and dry, with his monocle; Alexis, a swarthy Provençal, a great joker and "skirt-chaser"; Maupassant, broad-shouldered, athletic, rosy-cheeked, with large curling blond moustaches.

"Extreme left of the ink-well!" wrote Jean Richepin, of this group. And he further reproached them with being "ugly," finding their anatomical grace insufficient. This was scarcely fair to

Guy de Maupassant, who was certainly a handsome male; and if Alexis was unlovely, the fact did not seem to militate against his amorous successes.

These men were all very different in mould, and yet for a space of years were linked in a comradeship of great mutual value which was destined to be widely simulated afterward. "The finest time," said Alexis, "is that of the débuts. Afterward, once in mid-career, we always go our own way, worry about our own skin."

During these years when two such men as Guy de Maupassant and J. K. Huysmans adhered to the same "philosophy," when the submissive Alexis and the complex, mistrustful Céard accepted the same literary discipline, they had all deliberately abandoned general ideas in order to become good officials of a sort of "Bureau of Human Studies." They wrote patient, documented, pathological tracts on mediocre beings, in barracks, binderies, clothing shops, retail stores. They took delight in the narrowness of their vision, joyously combining the most commonplace stories of commonplace lives, with the most banal expressions overheard in office, street and café; they worked furiously to perfect details that would render more exact their imitations of life; they gathered with loving care the most brutal and profane expressions of reality. Zola urged his younger confrères on with undisguised warmth. He arranged for Maupassant's appearance in the *Voltaire,* and fathered the rise of Céard and Hennique. When Huysman's novel, *Les Soeurs Vatard,* a palpitating slice from the life of workers in a book-bindery, appeared, he was ravished. He had Charpentier publish it, telling him that Huysmans was the novelist of to-morrow. He reviewed it himself, terming it "a book of combat . . . with an intense life, which arouses the most provoking questions." The book had been dedicated "to Emile Zola by his fervent admirer and devoted friend." Huysmans, in his Naturalistic period, surpassed his master in concentrated, laborious ferocity. The time would come when they reached the reductio

ad absurdum of their theory, the jungle of contradictions and negations. When that time came, Huysmans first underwent the most spectacular conversion. . . . Yet Huysmans was never wanting in gratitude toward the man who had launched him and whom he was to renounce.

With clairvoyance Flaubert foresaw such an eventuality and was uneasy. "Cursed be the day that I had the fatal idea of writing *Madame Bovary*," he exclaimed to his niece.

"Beware," he wrote to Huysmans concerning *Les Soeurs Vatard*, "we are going to fall for stereotyped subjects, preciosity of words as in the time of classical tragedy. It will be found that vile expressions have a good effect on the style, as in the past it was thought fanciful ones prettified it."

And in conversation, he said, with much charm and truth, "You are much younger than I, my dear friend, and I believe I can predict—I, myself shall be gone then—the downfall of this school that is successful today, or rather, which is in vogue, something that does not always, as my old and often wise friend Baudelaire used to say, mean success."*

* And yet Flaubert had rigorously drilled his pupil, Maupassant, who was his "spiritual son," in those literary precepts which became the platform of Naturalist prose.

"The thing to do," he would say to Guy de Maupassant, "is to examine everything you wish to express long enough and with enough attention to discover in it an aspect that no one else has ever seen or spoken of. There is something of the unexplored in everything, because we are accustomed to *employing our eyes only with the memory of what has been thought before about the object of our contemplation.* The very least object contains a little of the unknown. Let us look for it. . . . This method forced me to express, in a few sentences, a being or an object in a way that particularized it exactly, that distinguished it from all other objects or beings of the same race or species.

"When you pass by a grocer seated before his shop," he would say, "or a janitor smoking his pipe, or a cab-horse before a carriage station, show me that grocer and that janitor, their position, their whole physical appearance, demonstrating also through the aptness of your image, their whole moral nature, in such a way that I could never confuse them with any other grocers or any other janitors. Make me see in a single word, a phrase, how the cab-horse does not resemble fifty others which follow and precede it."

N.B.—Is Realism, is Naturalism, other than a state of mind? When have we ever paused in our struggle toward reality, toward truth? In moments of fatigue, man seems merely to shift his gaze to new phenomena; thus, the sensations of an André Chénier on a dark night in a forest can scarcely be called *unreal* except

But this was no time for reckoning—perhaps the most serious count was the plethora of easy profanity which Naturalism invited —and they all worked gayly, encouraged and even cajoled by Zola to *produce* "so that we may overrun our time with our fecundity," as he said.

Before arriving at the "master's" for tea, "the five," often joined by Octave Mirbeau, gathered at the back of a wine shop in the Montmartre, "Mother Machina's," where they had a rude repast. The cuisine was bad, the meat was tough; only the patronne was jovial and colorful, and she served a stunning eau-de-vie, which soon made the sordid little shop widely known as the *Assommoir.*

"It was execrable and perilous to dine there," Huysmans recalled, "but we never ate with so much joy."

Zola, curious about their ribald gatherings, joined them for supper on one occasion, at the rue Puget, to see "Mother Machina," but found himself ill at ease in the suffocating atmosphere, and left quite physically upset. No, the father of Naturalism had but small stomach for these protracted séances of "real life." And it is even related later on, that when the five were wont to gather at Maupassant's quarters in the rue Clauzel (a perfect model, by the way for the *Maison Tellier,* by the esteemed tenant, since he was the only man in the house and it was entirely inhabited by "*filles*") the company would behave with moderation until the "master" had left, when Guy would invite his fair neighbors downstairs to meet his colleagues . . .

But the strangest and most redolent reunions were those at Zola's villa in Médan, and out of these came the famous book written by the six authors, *Les Soirées de Médan.* Maupassant, a mad sportsman, excelled himself by rowing all the way down the

through negligence. If a century after the Romantics, and a half-century after the Naturalists, we turn our eyes away from familiar carriage-horses to peruse and observe our dream-states, we are surely no less concerned with the Truth! But then, all the 19th Century hypotheses which Flaubert and Zola, willy-nilly, sucked in with their mothers' milk, have foundered for us.

winding Seine from Sartrouville (outside of Paris) to Médan, in a row-boat, which he had christened "Nana" and forthwith presented to Zola. There were jovial excursions in the "Nana" by the six Naturalists, Maupassant rowing, Alexis singing. A landing would be made on the island, which now belonged to Naturalism, and in the little chalet which the proprietor had had built recently the literary revolution swung into full stride.

Since it was a time when the whole country sang songs of revenge upon Prussia, and all the cabarets rang, with "They have broken my violin," or "T'is a bird that comes from France," the six authors agreed to write a war-story each, one that would contain a veracious document on the war. It was not a difficult plan, since all had something ready of the precise nature required. Zola's famous "Attack on the Mill," had already appeared in the "Messenger of Europe." Huysmans *Sac-au-Dos* had appeared in Belgium; Hennique had his story ready; Céard's *La Saignée* had been published in a Russian translation; only Maupassant's *Boule-de-Suif* ("Ball-of-fat") was written expressly for this edition.

There had always been a certain mystery about Maupassant's future. Despite the ennobling mentorship of Flaubert, jovial and inspiring god-father, nobody had ever seen Maupassant write or work seriously. The excessive frivolity of his private life was known. "We none of us conceded him much talent," Zola relates. And yet when the young man had finished reading his now celebrated story, they all stood up with amazement and saluted it as a masterpiece.

The question of a name for the book was considered for a long time. Huysmans proposed: "The Comic Invasion," but at length all agreed upon the sentimental and bourgeois appellation of "The Soirées of Médan," because as Céard said, it rendered homage to this "dear household where Mme. Zola treats us like a mother and delights in making great spoiled children of us."

If the publication of *"Les Soirées de Médan"* (April, 1880),

became a great event, much imitated thereafter, and marked the successful launching of five more authors, the manifestants were not innocent of planning such an effect. Alexis, great practical joker that he was, had written under a pseudonym an attack upon the "school" in the grossest language! And Maupassant had written a most sprightly and mystifying advance notice of the event, which explained the manner of its origin, in the *Gaulois*.

After pointing out that Schopenhauer and Herbert Spencer had better ideas on life than the author of *Les Misérables*, and that he for his part detested the old "sobbing barrel organ tunes whose mechanism Rousseau had invented," Maupassant went on to describe the gestation of the great collective effort.

"On a beautiful summer night in the country. . . . one of us has just taken a swim in the river, another has been walking about the country with great ideas in his head.

"During the long digestions of the long repasts (for we are all gourmands and gourmets and Zola alone eats as much as three ordinary novelists!) we chatted. Zola told us about his future novels, his literary ideas, his opinions on all things. Sometimes Zola, who is very near-sighted, would pick up his shotgun as he spoke and fire at tufts of grass (declared by us to be birds); he would be very astonished at not bringing down any game.

"On other days we fished. Hennique distinguished himself, to the great despair of Zola who caught nothing but old boots.

"As for me, I would lie stretched out in the 'Nana,' or would swim for hours, while Alexis wandered about full of sinister ideas, Huysmans smoked cigarettes, and Céard found the country stupid.

"One magnificent, warm evening, by the full moonlight, we were talking of Mérimée whom the ladies call: 'Such a charming story-teller!' Huysmans said: 'What an imbecile!'—And of Hugo: '*Merdes!*' cried somebody.

"But Zola suddenly had the excellent idea that we tell each other stories. We laughed, but agreed that in order to make it

difficult the form chosen by the first would be kept by the others who would use different incidents.

"And then Zola related that terrible page from the history of war which is called: 'The Attack on the Mill.'

"When it was finished, all of us cried, 'You must write that down at once.' He laughed: 'It is done.'

"It was my turn the next day, and so on. But Paul Alexis made us wait four days, never being able to find any subject. Zola found the narratives very curious and proposed that we make a book of them . . ."

The book was an instantaneous success, despite the uproar over *Nana.* All the five virtually unknown younger men, were "made." Hennique wrote novels and plays, becoming chiefly noted as a playwright in connection with the Free Theater movement of several years later. Zola had urged him in this path, saying, "It will be fine if one of us triumphs in the theater." Henry Céard became noted later for having written the most perfectly Naturalistic novel (!) "A Fine Day," in which nothing, absolutely nothing happened! After all it was a very sad book . . . Alexis pursued an oscillating and bohemian course through journalism and drama. But it was Maupassant who profited most heavily. His *Boule de Suif* had made him renowned and popular with the great public overnight. His next book, *La Maison Tellier,* had an astonishing sale; and he delivered himself at once to a career of unrestrained and pathological license, simultaneously with one of equally unbounded literary output. For the women of Europe he became the favorite author; *Une Vie, Claire de Lune, Bel Ami,* and all the others appeared in their time, some thirty volumes written in little more than ten years. Somehow, interest in him lags from now on, since he is chiefly a subject of scandal. "A man who has instituted himself an artist," Flaubert had taught him, "does not have the right to live like others." But he was a lovely case of hereditary maladies, consummated by the type of sexual excesses he elected, excesses which had been too strong even for

the superhuman French sires of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The brief arc of his life descends swiftly in deepened tragedy, as his sinister adventures and horrible obsessions declare to himself the approaching darkness of complete insanity.

The case of Huysmans is more complex. More curious and more sensuous personality than all the others, he had by books such as *Croquis Parisiens,* with their brutal pictures of depravity, even brought upon himself the tolerant reproaches of the master of Médan for "his quest of pathological cases, his taste for human sores." Having resisted all forms of tainted idealism more passionately, having pursued materialism to its bitterest limits, having arrived more swiftly than the others at the "blocked tunnel, the impasse of Naturalism," Huysmans achieves that tormenting and poignant symphony of the senses, *A Rebours,* only four years after the era of Médan. It was the step which led to the foot of the Cross.

Lured originally, by the novel somberness of its hues, by its deceptively broad prospects and audacity, all the votaries of this transient nineteenth century credo which I have variously called Determinism and Materialism and Naturalism, and even Zola himself, were in turn compelled to abandon it, or to evade its consequences: complete negation of the spiritual activity which accompanies or pervades *all* our actions.

"I am growing tired of the theories of my friend Emile Zola whose absolute materialism revolts me," Huysmans would say. "I wish to show him and the others that none of the mysteries which surround us are ever explained. . . ." Religion in the end became his "bizarre and seductive flower." His love of Christianity, and above all of its attendant idea of Evil, something for which he always listened in himself with the minuteness of a true-born Naturalist, was carnal and dogmatic. He became, as he longed to, the realistic novelist of "supernatural things," of the religious experiences. Thus is explained his persistent affection for Zola, who had not only given him powerful aid and encour-

agement in his débuts, but whose temperament had early called to the deepest and most enduring chords of his own strange nature.

The mental separation which took place between these two men, occurred on the occasion of the appearance of *A Rebours* (1884).

"I recall that I went to spend several days at Médan, after the appearance of *A Rebours*," says Huysmans. "One afternoon while we were both taking a walk in the country, he stopped suddenly, and with frowning eyes, reproached me for this book, saying that I had delivered a terrible blow to Naturalism, that I was dividing the school, that I was burning my bridges with such a novel, that no type of literature was possible in this genre, exhausted by a single volume; and amiably, for he was a noble fellow, he exhorted me to return to the beaten road, and set to work upon a novel of morals."

❦ ❦ ❦

During the great run of *L'Assommoir* at the Théatre Ambigu, an event which brought much gold to the Zola coffers, there was also held an "Assommoir Ball" at the Elysée-Montmartre, in honor of Zola and attended by the foremost men-of-letters and artists of the day. An old friend, Manet, had brought to this ball, a young Anglo-Irishman who at the moment was the adoration of Bohemian Paris. Slender as he was, with drooping shoulders and long hair, his face covered with a golden-red beard out of which shone two very pale blue eyes, and wearing the outlandish workingman's costume of Coupeau, one can scarcely imagine this early version of George Moore—for it was George Moore—impressing Zola either with his person or his admiration.

Manet had presented him to the hero of the ball, and he had been accorded little attention indeed by the novelist, who was *not* in a costume—for as Manet said: "You could not expect a serious writer to appear in disguise." The not yet serious Moore (fated never to become *serious*, perhaps) seeking Zola later in the evening amid the press and confusion of the dancers, in order to

converse with him, found to his bitter regret that he had slipped silently away from the festival, thinking no doubt of not interrupting his firm habits of matutinal labor.

It was Manet again who urged Moore to go and visit Médan, which he did a few months later.

George Moore found Zola sitting on a divan and correcting proofs, manifesting no curiosity in his young English admirer. Zola, fat, famous, and forty, with his bristling brown hair of a "bear" frightened even the audacious author of "Confessions of a Young Man."

"I recalled having been told," says Moore, "that Zola never lost time in judging whether he had an idiot or a man of talent to deal with, and that at the end of a minute he would rid himself of the idiot. And as I watched the terrible master, sitting on his sofa, who with his spectacles mounted on his nose, read me and divined the commonplace things I was about to say, I thought that even if Homer and Shakespeare were meeting for the first time, they would have to begin with remarks on the weather, and I demanded only the same privileges which this man would have given Homer or Shakespeare."

Moore's compliments seemed only to bore Zola who, resembling a small, massive, imperturbable Buddha, scarcely suggested the novelist whom Moore read with passion every week. Soon the vivacious foreigner had broken the ice, and the coldness of the first greeting was forgotten in the animated conversation that sprang up. It was several hours before Zola was rid of his visitor, who joyously told himself on the train journey back to Paris, "I had made a friend! . . . He is certainly the man I had imagined. A clear mind, balanced, sympathetic, passionate in his convictions, persistent in his opinions. A little gruff at first, but perhaps what I had taken for gruffness was nothing more than timidity . . . And beside, it must be rather dull to be told to your face that you are a great writer . . . I should not like it myself."

Zola took great interest in Moore, upon whose early work he

exercised a deep influence, as witness "Esther Waters," and all the early Naturalistic novels of Moore. In fact, a host of writers streamed to Médan, from the countries east of the Rhine and south of the Alps, as well as the youth of France, Bourget, Edouard Rod, Octave Mirbeau, who came to Zola and heard his bitter counsels.

"Why don't you," he wrote to Moore some years later, August 15, 1886, "set to work at once upon a novel about Ireland; a social novel, truthful, audacious, revolutionary? . . . England would be consternated by it; never did such an occasion offer itself to move a whole people. Think of it! Boldness, boldness, and more boldness."

A most characteristic utterance, whose precepts Moore did not immediately follow, knowing perhaps his England too well. Nor did he share the heroic combativeness of Zola . . . Yet some years later, in the three volumes of *Hail and Farewell*, an extraordinarily living, satirical and penetrating picture of Dublin and Irish society at a particularly rich moment of their artistic life appeared and evoked well the message of Zola.

Later they quarreled. Tenacious and intolerant master, Zola only aided the gradual desertion which followed in the train of his immense celebrity and domination. . . . Something Moore had written about his *La Terre* (1887) did not seem favorable enough to certain tenets of Naturalism, and this combined with a great renewed outburst of opposition in unexpected quarters, led to Zola's shutting his door coldly upon George Moore, despite the pleading of the faithful Alexis who had escorted him, and despite the efforts of Moore, text in hand to explain away the misunderstanding. "I had come to Médan with an apprehension which recalled my first visit. . . ." says Moore. In vain. It was a moment, when ravaged by certain experiences and embittered by certain defections, the soul of Zola longed to shut its door upon the world for a time and live alone with its own passions. . . . The break is all the more grotesque in view of Moore's veritable admiration for the work in question. "Do you know which book of Zola's

has left in me the most persistent impression, and which I shall in spite of all, read and reread?" he said to a friend many years later. *La Terre!* And it is true, that this mad, somber, fanatically brutal story, one of the most terrible books that the hand of man has ever written, where Zola reveals himself indeed "the black poet" he proclaimed himself to be, surpasses all the others in its wild humor.

Gustave Flaubert had been living an even more retired life than was usual with him, in recent years. He had abruptly, as I have said, lost his fortune, through his own gentleness for others, and found himself in a precarious position, which made it necessary to live quietly in his ancestral home at Croisset, near Rouen, in Normandy. The failure of his *Education Sentimentale* had depressed him deeply some years before. "The Temptation of Saint-Anthony" and the "Three Tales" were all that had been published in the ten years between 1870 and 1880. For the past six years he had now been working over "Bouvard and Pécuchet" with that esthetic monasticism, that reaching for effects beyond his power perhaps, which enraged him perpetually, that pursuit, in short, of "purity" or "finality" which is so imperceptible in most of his pages, and which hastening as it did his own despair and destruction led future generations to recoil with dismay from the kind of futile travail known as "Flaubertism."

The efforts of his friends to secure him an honorable post in return for his genial contributions to literature went astray cumbersomely, owing to the stupidity of Gambetta. Zola had written Flaubert a letter full of humility in connection with this. No, assuredly, Flaubert had gone to his country to die, slowly, like an old dog, he himself said, who has been cast off and forgotten, but who has rendered faithful services. Hating the age, the republic, the railroads, the press, and Naturalism, too,—how little one visages the author of *Madame Bovary* thus!—he preserved nevertheless the beautiful friendships which his nature

inspired, and the ineffably charming manners of an older day.

Once, years before, in a visit with Flaubert, Zola had talked about one of his novels. Names fascinated him, a trick inherited from his older friend. He would spend days at a time burrowing in the Paris Directory, "believing firmly in a mysterious correlation between name and man. Some of my names, such as *Saccard* for instance, I consider great discoveries; *Rougon* has a certain dignity and majesty, though common in the south of France, which *Macquart*, vulgar as it is, has not. Thus the legitimate and bastard branches of the *Rougon-Macquart* family are thrown into contrast . . . and the reader is prepared for vast differences in the characteristics of the members of the family, which is just the effect I desired."

"Flaubert," cried Zola, "I have just devised a splendid name for one of my characters: *Bouvard!* . . ."

"What!" exclaimed Flaubert, turning pale and trembling all over. "What is the name?"

"*Bouvard.* Why? Isn't it good, Flaubert?"

Flaubert rushed from the room and descended to the terrace overlooking the garden, and paced up and down, madly, like a man who has just received a mortal blow from his dearest friend.

Zola pursued him, in consternation, "What, what have I done, my good friend? What can I have done, *mon vieux, mon bon?*"

Flaubert, in whose great blue eyes there stood tears, suddenly seized his friend by both shoulders, confronting him with great emotion.

"The work of six years ruined! I shall absolutely throw it out, burn it! Zola, I beg you, do me this supreme favor, renounce the name *Bouvard*, else I cannot go on with my *Bouvard et Pécuchet!*"

"But gladly, my dear friend, I renounce it. I shall find another name that will do me just as well, in the newspapers or the directory."

Flaubert embraced Zola with the transport of a child. What

service could he do for him in return? Life became possible again.

When the thought presented itself, he approached a friend and admirer, Bardoux, then in the cabinet as Minister of Education, and proposed Emile Zola for the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor. The idea was accepted, and promised for the near future, and news of approaching honors for the author of *L'Assommoir* was transmitted to him. However, some diffidence developed among the authorities, and two years passed without the materialization of the red bauble, always accorded to other and smaller contemporaries. Flaubert was deeply chagrined, and Zola who had never thus far sought public honors, became furious at being so obviously discriminated against.

"Sir, I have been compelled in my time to swallow quite a lot of toads," he had written to the Minister, "but this is by far the worst! . . ."

Late in March, 1880, a visit to Flaubert in Croisset by the Daudets, the Charpentiers, the Zolas, Goncourt and Maupassant at once was agreed upon. They were received by Flaubert, "his good, affectionate head topped with a high *calabrais* hat, his broad frame encased in a colored vest, his fat bottom in pleated wide pantaloons, *à la Turque* . . ."

It was a very beautiful estate. There were great manorial trees, whose forms were twisted by the wind. The broad Seine flowed by, descending from Paris and Médan, whence Zola often "sent handshakes" to Flaubert by passing vessels, whose masts only could be seen beyond the limits of the garden, "as if in the depths of a stage." The vast house, in which Flaubert had finally retreated to the occupation of only a few rooms with his servant, "had an air of the past, and of death, of the spider-webs of old literary disputes." Outside lay the long terrace, in the full sunlight, which Flaubert was wont to pace, alone in this stylistic laboratory or monastery overlooking the Seine where the ferocious

chase for musical sentences, for *proper* conjunctions, repetitions, alliterations, where the struggle against grammar and syntax toward perfection was carried on to its bitter end.

Nevertheless all was gay again on this occasion. The dinner was fine; the fish, with *sauce à la crème Turbot*, was long remembered, the wines were rich and persuasive. "Thick stories were told. . . . and Flaubert *guêlait* with his roaring laughter, like the puffs of joy of a child." Flaubert warmed his guests with an intimate affection which they were almost never to feel again with quite such security.

Six weeks later, a simple telegram came from Guy de Maupassant to Médan: "Flaubert dead."

They had but just left him, touched and happy over their pilgrimage and his paternal hospitality, making an appointment in Paris for the first week in May, when this blow fell.

"I was idiotic with grief," Zola says. Edmond de Goncourt, likewise stricken, wandered about Paris and walked the streets for hours, joining with Zola and Daudet the following day for the journey to Rouen.

The long-feared apoplectic stroke had come, with Flaubert virtually agonizing over his manuscript. In the bright sunlight, amid the festive indifference of a holiday in Flaubert's native city, Zola, leaving the station, encountered in the street the little *cortège* of men of letters and reporters that made its way toward the church and the cemetery.

"The last ten years of our literary life had been linked with him," wrote Zola in his essay on Flaubert, which is full of tenderness and passion. There are certain men whose friendship is so intimate, so pervasive, that one can only imagine them *living* beside one; impossible to understand them dead. . . .

A few months later, in the autumn, Zola's mother died at Médan. Her son's attachment had been more profound than even he realized. The early years had been a common struggle, in

which she had sought to protect him with that animal passion which knows no limits. And now, the circumstances of her death were particularly cruel. From her chamber in the crazy tower of the villa of Médan, they had been compelled to lower the coffin through a window specially enlarged, because of the narrowness of the winding stairs. A dozen times it had seemed as if everything would go crashing to the ground in the hands of the inept peasants who were the pallbearers. There was then a long journey to Aix, in the company of the remains, which were deposited in the Provençal cemetery beside the father of Zola.

The combined weight of such events interrupted the continuity of Zola's labors. No novel is completed in this year, nor late until the next. Only the books compiled from the campaign articles in favor of Naturalism appear in 1880 and 1881, "Literary Documents, The Naturalist Novelists, Our Dramatic Authors, Naturalism in the Theater, A Campaign, 1880-1881,"—this last waged in the *Figaro* with great vigor upon a variety of subjects—all were compiled and published during this melancholy interlude.

The "dinners of the hissed authors," were resumed in the following winters, but the thread was broken. "All was changed for them," Alphonse Daudet recalls, "We would leave a vacant place at the table for Flaubert. . . . but his deep voice and his explosive laughter were too greatly wanting."

Emile Zola himself was far from a regaling companion at this time. Ever since the death of his mother, he complained of hypochondria, as well as of maladies of the kidneys, and the heart. The fixed idea of death hounded him for years afterward.

Sitting at the foot of the great bed in carved wood, at his home, he would say: "The loss of my mother has made a breach, for the time being, in the complete nihilism of my religious convictions . . . This being haunted by the idea of death, by revulsion at the thought of an eternal separation from a dear being . . . may mean the growth of another philosophical attitude . . ." He spoke also of his superstitions. He had a trick of counting

numbers. If he had to wait somewhere he spent the minutes counting steps on a stairway, gas-lamps down the street, people going in and out of a door. He liked the number 3; he liked the number 7; he feared certain other numbers. Every night at Médan, he closed the windows and persiennes with hermetical combinations and certain uniform gestures which he counted to himself; the number 17 worried him above all. He also had an obsession that he was going to die during the night. Sometimes he would wake up with a cry, a piercing pain in his heart, and a feeling of strangulation in his throat. At others he could not fall asleep because of the obsession that his heart had moved into his arm-pit—*that he could hear it there!*—or into his hip or his knee. The nocturnal life of the Zolas became a torment, Alexandrine becoming increasingly depressed and hysterical at periods under this régime. When storms came up in the country Zola would become particularly frightened. He would shut up everything in a nervous panic. A burst of lightning and thunder would keep him cowering and trembling in bed for long minutes, moaning as if in pain. . . . His nerves were excessively sensitive, those of hearing, smell, touch especially. The roughness of clothing tickled and tormented him. He visited doctors; they told him that it was clear that he was somewhat neuropathic, that his nervous system "was a painful one." Under their advice he gave up drinking, smoking; he moderated his diet.

The thought, above all, that harassed him, was that he would die prematurely, die *before he had finished* this cursed series of *Rougon-Macquart!*

The philosophical ambience of the time was scarcely comforting, and Zola was a man who was above all moved by general ideas. There was a secret disenchantment during the era of Victorian materialism in France. For among the devotees of science, the new idol, all the old "metaphysical chimerae" had vanished, the religious dreams, the respect for the past, the illusions of fine

sentiments. Man was put in his place again, a quite small place, on the same plan as the animals or the most elementary forms of life; soul, intelligence, ideal aspirations, were only words which had gradually lost their meaning in a world where all was mechanically regulated, where all beings threw themselves against and recoiled from the shocks of immutable and eternal laws.

The proximity of death brought only closer the sense of futility and the idea, characteristic of the time, of "eternal recurrence." Schopenhauer likewise was contemporary, and his cruel skepticism, his preaching of "renunciation" of a painful, worldly life, which science exposed too completely for any one to know any more the "joy of living," was spreading in Europe.

"The Joy of Living" was in fact the title of the book over which Zola worked at this time and set aside until later, and which encompasses his obsessions and his metaphysical sorrows.

"And each time," the young hero of this melancholy book would conclude, "science would have been quite useful if she had divulged the means of blowing up the universe at one stroke by aid of some colossal explosive . . . Then defiling, in cold mockery, through the ruses of that Will which directs the world, the blind stupidity of the will-to-live, all life seen as pain, he arrived at the morality of the Indian fakirs, at deliverance through Nirvana . . ."

Somebody offers him a toast to his hundredth year. "He turned pale. The number sent a shudder through his whole body, evoking the time when he would no longer be here, and of which the eternal fear hovered in the depths of his flesh. In a hundred years, what would he be? He emptied his glass with a trembling hand. . . ."

The melancholy of Zola would become at times a source of wonder and displeasure for his friends. In the spring he would be anxious to quit Paris. "I have my back full of it!" he would say.

Céard and Huysmans would arrive and dispute with him.

They would urge him to cease being the hermit; the question of *living*, "of living one's life," came up frequently.

They would attempt to banter with him: did he not have some *petite amie* in town?

And he would answer, with the greatest seriousness and not without surprising them:

"Another woman! But I am married. I live happily with my wife. Why should I run after anybody else?"

Stretched out on his sofa at Médan, he would complain also of the flood of letters which women sent him, offering their hearts in the absolute conviction that he was a bloodthirsty male.

"Why can't they let me alone? I am happy with my wife. What more do I want?" And as to the public which professed to be revolted by *Nana* but deluged him with indecent letters, he exploded: "*Je m'en fous!* What do I care about what they say? I am pretty snug here, am I not? To-morrow I shall pay off the last five hundred on my house, and it will be my own property."

The letters Zola received in mass, he always answered, if only with a word and his signature. Those from troubled ladies, he would be wary of, sending Alexis frequently to *rendez-vous*, at times Céard, even Huysmans, little apostles who bore willingly the Calvary of Naturalism.

As to life-and-experience, he would outline his principles: happiness was to be found only in the consistent union of marriage. Man prolonged himself, after death, through offspring; love without issue was mere adultery. Here there would be an awkward pause. The Zolas had no children, and the halls of their villa were lonely. . . .

"To live one's life," cries Zola. "You believe that necessary? . . . I know well that it is the fashion, and that to no small extent we [the Naturalists] are the cause of it. . . . But the old masters often did without it. No, it is not as indispensable as people think."

As to his frequenting society, as he was urged to do: "Tell

me, what does a salon reveal about life? There is nothing to be seen. I have twenty-five workingmen at Médan who teach me far more. . . ."

With his collar opened, with his woolen blouse unbuttoned, one of his confrères recalled, leaning with his elbows on the table filled with glasses of beer which thwart his gestures, he passes the whole evening "groaning like a child, a fat child."

"Here is a man," observes Edmond de Goncourt sourly, "who fills the world with his name, whose books sell by the hundred thousand, and who enjoys perhaps the greatest notoriety of any living author, yet by his sickness, his hypochondria, is more unhappy, more desolate than the most cast-off of sour grapes."

A stream of document-novels flowed from Médan in the following years. Their tendency is marked enough, to predict some day a political crescendo for the career of Zola. In the press, the campaign came to a halt in the final article of the *Figaro*. The familiar pugnacity and boldness of Zola rings out despite all pessimism. The force-of-life in him dominates all else.

"If I have made myself heard above the fearful turmoil of modern times, it is because I was sincere and impassioned!"

"We must have passion," he insists. "To rise up from the morning newspaper boiling with ever fresh indignation over the stupidities one reads!"

The political atmosphere had played a large part in Zola's convictions. We have seen how the fall of Bonaparte had provided a climax for his "natural and social history of a family under the Second Empire," while also greatly constricting the period of time in which it all transpired. The conviction spread also that the prose literature of Zola and his school was really the literature of the Republic, a government based *soi-disant* on a more "scientific" attitude toward government than monarchy, on a truer sense of

the realities of social life, and on greater "respect for analysis and experiment."

It was only ten years after the bloody Fourth of September, that Royalist factions were admitted generally to be powerless, and that a younger group of republican statesmen had actually rooted their system in France. And so it became a commonplace among bitterly reactionary critics, like Pontmartin, to recognize that political fortunes had favored the Naturalists.

"An infectious literature has arisen from the triumph of democracy and radicalism," Pontmartin had written with admirable if intolerant rage, "like those swarms of stinking and obnoxious insects which pullulate in slime and spread pestilence after the overflowing of torrents!"

After demanding that the new and now firmly founded republic approve him and his literature, in such a manifesto as "The Republic and Literature," Zola appears deeply bound up with the fate of such a government, although, it is true, approval came slowly and unwillingly. Had not his vivid sense of the time given his literary action a dominantly social character like that of Voltaire and Diderot and Rousseau? And the Republic, created by men of his beliefs, if ever threatened, was it not for him to defend it?

Pot-Bouille appeared in 1882, two years after *Nana.* "The clearest and most condensed of my novels," Zola had declared. And then he had exclaimed, one day when the Daudets, the Charpentiers and Goncourt had come to Médan, "*Ah fichtre!* It will be one of the most complicated I have ever done. . . . There are seventy-six characters!" He could take things in a *mass,* as in this novel, and marshal them methodically, as a general handles his battalions. I have told how he worked with the "placidity of an old compiler," first soliloquizing over his general ideas, the two or three forces in play, his chief character; then writing a sketch or outline; then a more elaborate sketch, or scenario; finally a

scenario of individual chapters and scenes, down to the last details; and of his files of information, reports; his gallery of major and minor characters.

In the case of *Pot-Bouille*, a study of the grossness and the venery of the small bourgeoisie, his friends Céard and Huysmans had collaborated with love. Both had gone snooping and prowling about the quarter which the Naturalist master had chosen to "experiment" upon, and brought joyously back to him descriptions of apartment houses, of servant quarters, of concierges, of *débutantes*, of imbeciles. The book became a ferocious exposé of the sentiments and the morality of the little-bourgeois; there was nothing but money-greed, fornication in vestibules, avarice, jealousy, hypocrisy. The young provincial hero, offspring of the Rougons, learns easily to triumph over this class and to temper his respect with scorn. He becomes, after moderate trials, the head of a great new department store. . . .

The work was "nothing but a task of precision and clearness. No bravoura, no lyrical regalements . . ." he had written to Céard. He had long been sensitive on the score of romanticism. Here he restrains himself, he follows his method calmly and confidently. "It will be my *Education Sentimentale*." A *perfectly* Naturalistic work! Although he occasionally feels some qualms: "When one feels passion, is it artful to deny it or even to restrain it? . . . Well, my pleasure in this is not ardent, simply the amusement of a mechanic directing the play of a thousand cog-wheels with meticulous care. . . ."

At the Charpentier salon in the winter, he responded to questions:

"My new novel? . . . It will get me treated as a *cochon, hein* my friend! . . . Well, the fact is that there is a good deal of that in it. . . . But it is the fault of the little-bourgeois whom I am picturing, it is not my fault."

Pot-Bouille was the drabbest book Zola ever wrote. Despite its successfully organized reality, all the dark poetry which lived

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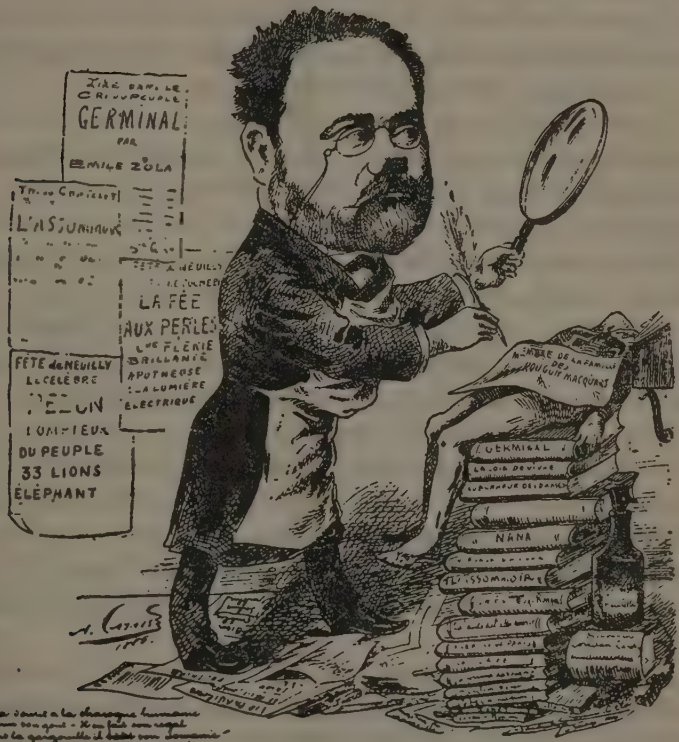


EMILE ZOLA

THE SCIENTIFIC NOVELIST DISSECTING THE CORPSE OF A MEMBER OF THE ROUGON-MACQUART FAMILY

The Caricature Also Includes Some Doggerel About "Naturalism, and Zolaism," and the "Master" Ploughing his Way Through "the Mire."

in Zola seems to have been for the time sold to the devil. It is photography, the stupid discolored photography which succeeded the era of Daguerre. It is the reductio ad absurdum of Naturalism. It is Zola following the routine *train-train* of his little method, forgetting himself for the time, as he yields to the most mediocre aspects of his nature.

Likewise *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883), despite its picture of a modern monument, one of the huge new department stores which were crushing the small tradespeople of Paris.

Likewise, *La Joie de Vivre* (1884), in which the pessimism which rules this period makes its most obvious and palpable appearance, although pictured with more of the old sincerity, and confined to a firm group of only three or four provincial characters.

"He joyed in the contrast," observes the son of Alphonse Daudet, "between the obscenities and fæcalities of his books and his own tranquil and measured life during this time. Chastity, in his view, was indispensable in order to plunge into the social gutter and bring back imposing samples. He stalked 'Truth' between the Morgue and the Incinerator. . . ."

With *Germinal* (1885) it is something quite different. "But when one writes so many books," Zola would say, "it is impossible that they should all be of equal value. . . . And then one must consider the *ensemble*. I take things in the mass, I am a painter of masses; and I suppose painters of masses are not generally very *clever*. . . ."

In the full swing of his success, Emile Zola could be encountered from time to time at Charpentier's office reading the returns:

"Forty-eight thousand, forty-nine thousand," in a somewhat tremulous voice,—"and when we got to the fiftieth thousand, old chap, I said to myself, we shall surely reach sixty-thousand, all right. Eh, Charpentier, what?"

In the next room, through the open door, Daudet and Goncourt could hear.

"What an animal, that Zola!" Goncourt suddenly exclaimed

in impatient but low tones. The phenomenon of literary jealousy raises its green apparition. . . .

And yet the curve of sales since the great, compromised success of *Nana* was downward! *Nana* had moved rapidly toward six figures. *Pot-Bouille* had gone through 30,000 into 40,000 toward the 50,000 mark. *Au Bonheur des Dames* had started more slowly and then had begun to lag. And then *La Joie de Vivre* had been greeted even more quietly, having the most diminished sales of all, and dragged along apparently only by the momentum of the other books!

And so at moments Zola spoke in a tone of discouragement that was quite comic: "The great days are over . . . the great sales are finished . . ." and his large face drew itself into those lines of deep disappointment and chagrin which were so fundamental and familiar with him; the agile nostrils of the celebrated nose ceased to "flutter." . . .

A libel-suit in connection with *Pot-Bouille,* wherein an unknown gentleman, named similarly to one of the least distinguished characters, gained damage and interest of several thousand francs, and wherein the "stercorous" nature of the Zola volumes was "demonstrated" in court by virtue of selected and specialized passages, was ill calculated to relieve the pall that hung over Médan; or the sense of frustration and of ambient hostility growing in him who was spleenfully termed the "slimy giant of Médan."

From now on enemies sprang up everywhere, within the camp and without. People laid suit against the author for names he had used thirteen years ago; sermons were preached against his books from the pulpit and the press. He was accused again and again of plagiarism. Embittered, Zola passed one whole winter in Médan without coming to Paris.

It rained in torrents, and as he wrote to Turgenieff, they were nearly "drowned, and a small island which I own in the Seine was inundated under six feet of water. . . ."

When he saw his friends, Zola spoke of "the cross which literature had become for him," of his rage to go on and finish the *Rougon Macquart*. "I should like to bury myself in a work which I should never finish. . . . Yes, it would be a pretext for ceasing to be in eternal communication with the public, to withdraw from literature without telling them. . . . I want calm. I want calm. . . ."

Whenever Zola found himself seriously menaced, or observed the warnings of deterioration in himself, let us say, his income of a millionaire dipping a little below 100,000 francs per annum, he bestirred himself, and if only out of sheer self-assertion, prepared some prodigious stroke that would rally his dwindling public. He was like a pirate who having won his pot of gold is forced to defend it thereafter against all comers. Having gained the vast international public of a millionaire romancer his tormenting problem henceforth was to hang on to this public. *Ah, fichtre!* From now on he could only go backward! Having become a "force" it remained for him only to go on demonstrating that force, wearily to wield his reputed bludgeon, through the long years.

THE FAT AND THE THIN

BOOK THREE

"To make a book, to plant a tree, to have a child. . . ."

CHAPTER XII

THE ENEMIES OF ZOLA

A SURPRISING change became visible in the spirit of the Bourgeois of Médan toward 1885. It was widely remarked upon the appearance of *Germinal* that Emile Zola had turned socialist. . . .

It had been seen in preceding books that Zola showed little sympathy for the politically-thinking workingman. The radical in *L'Assommoir* who spouts revolution, is obviously a scoundrel and a faker. To the agitation in the republican press that his great cross-section of the slums was a calumny upon the working people, Zola had replied calmly that his object was to show "with scientific objectiveness" what society had made of its lower classes. All hope of progress for the Republic depended upon whether it took a Naturalistic or scientific attitude toward social problems. He would merely go on *exposing*, without taking sides. . . .

If, however, in the later '80's the political atmosphere had changed considerably, a work like *L'Assommoir*, the gesture of writing such a book, was justified and carried its author himself in a logical progression of ideas which involved ultimately the abandonment of his professed Naturalism. For it was toward 1884, that great strikes took place in France and Belgium, and that the Socialist party in France and elsewhere, hitherto a visionary and disorganized energy, became a political reality.

It happened that Zola had long meditated a second work on the laboring class, and his searches for documents in connection with this and other books, made him less indifferent to the ideal of a socialist republic. He precipitated himself upon socialist doctrines as he had previously upon the coldly experimental ones of Taine and Claude Bernard, and he assimilated them with an enthusiasm and a facility which have less of the scientific attitude than of the romantic and humanitarian sentiments of his youth.

The doubt, the pessimism, the rancor, of many years and many documented novels are not only assuaged but find an objective. The new beliefs afforded great contentment even to his hatred of the bourgeois class of which he was now such a signal member. It was a supreme pleasure to be able to announce the Revolution, the great ruddy evening (or dawn) when an expiring capitalism should witness, after the last victorious uprising and the bloody catastrophes, a society of free individuals united by work and love.

The representatives of his new aspirations were lodged in *Germinal*. Souvarine, a nihilist, who dreams only of exploding the old world, then with a calm song on his lips to wander to some other strange land; the abbé Ranvier, a Christian socialist who prophesies the coming extinction of the capitalists through fire and brimstone; Etienne Lantier, son of Gervaise Macquart, an intelligent workingman who educates himself by reading Marx, Proudhon and Lassalle, discovering thus a great religion of hatred and love, and leading the revolt of the miners.

Hatred of the Second Empire as well, had begun by 1885 to assume a rather retrospective character; and henceforth it is not only in material but in the very movement of his ideas that Zola reflects the period of the Third Republic in France instead of the period he originally studied. Thus the events described in *Germinal* are primarily of the last third of the century, with its increasingly bitter class struggle, and the portent of the book threw Zola again into the thick of controversies which were filling the press. He was again squarely "at the head of the movement of progress."

Zola had forsaken the treasonable comforts of Médan and spent the best part of several months traveling about with his portfolios through the various mining districts of Northern France and of Belgium. He had interviewed miners, explored mines from mouth to lowest depths, attended political meetings, drinking horrible beer and still more horrible *eau de vie*. He had investigated miners' wives and wandered about the fields in the neighborhood of those villages to watch the boys and girls take their pastimes when the day's drudgery was over.

Over this voluminous material he set to work, "as I have never worked over any novel, and that without much hope of being rewarded. It is the kind of book one does for oneself, for one's conscience."

Germinal is one of Zola's three or four major novels as well as one of the major successes. It is suddenly, after a lapse, one would say, in the grand style of Emile Zola; that is: its substance appealed profoundly to his passions, and the execution it demanded was exquisitely suited to his greatest aptitudes. The uproar in the enemy press was convincing enough; and likewise in the world of letters the unanimity of applause, opponents like Richepin and Anatole France joining Edouard Rod, Geffroy and Céard in their recognition. The new generation of politicians proffered its hand to an unexpected force. A blaze of insurrections in the mining regions during the following two years was attributed flatteringly to *Germinal*.

The book is very simple in its construction, much like one of the great Russian novels. It has a deep sustained breath, a towering passion, a headlong eloquence that is brought into French literature by the men from the South. It is lyrical, it is romantic. . . .

Etienne Lantier, destitute and starving, comes to the small mining community of the black North of France seeking work. He becomes one of a family of miners; learns their labors and their grief, lives, eats, sleeps exhaustedly, scrubs the black coal

from his body in unison with them, in their grimy hovel. By long stages he becomes the leader of their revolt.

Germinal has been accepted justly as one of the superb examples of the document-novel of the nineteenth century. It is perfect as well, in representing the philosophy which Zola avowed: man as the pawn of mechanical forces (here, economic), the *thing*, primarily of his age and his social environment. Individual actions, individual destinies, hold their place only in a larger, more universal scheme of actions and reactions; they are part, in short, of a larger and general fate. Thus his principal characters are threaded skilfully into the mass movements of his epic novel. Among the miners, sublimated in rare moments above the instinct of reproduction, love struggles against squalor and implacable circumstance; among the bourgeois, he places by contrast the scenes of a closet-drama, a cuckolding going on behind doors closed to besieging insurrectionists: "individual suffering posed against or accompanied by the eternal injustice of the classes," to use Zola's own words.

Eventually all these individual destinies, all these minor and major characters, in a great swarm, all clearly etched, are enveloped and swept up in that great cataclysm that symbolizes their lives, the strike. For *Germinal* is the poem of a strike. The whole central portion of the book, for hundreds of pages, deals with the assembling of the outraged miners in the forest at night, and their long procession consequently in a mob through one mining town after another, upon a career of vengeance and destruction. This wild, starved band is pictured in a long and intense poem in which Zola reveals again his gift for visioning and projecting large masses in movement. All the moments in the life of this mob are stark and clear, from that in which the dying sunset throws "great lakes of blood" upon the flat plains behind them and upon their distorted faces, to that dreadful pause and silence which precedes the firing by military guards upon the bare fisted men and women. Who is their enemy? Who is it that

The Desk of the World-Renowned Novelist in the *Hotel* of the Rue de Rome, Toward 1890, Has Gained in Magnificence, and Reveals a Heightened Flair for the Baroque, Which Flaubert Had Noted a Generation Previously.

A SYMPATHETIC AND LITTLE KNOWN PORTRAIT

Toward 1888—Showing the Celebrated Brow "Like a Tower" and, *Sans Pince-Nez*, a Profile Much More Prepossessing and Mild Than One Had Been Led to Believe.

refuses them the few more pennies a day they demand in order to survive? Not the manager of the mine, a good-hearted fellow whom they know. "The stockholders" of the Company! They must wait until the stockholders, a vague force, incomprehensible, and far off in Paris, decide their fate.

It is a losing struggle that plunges through settings of macabre reality and extravagant if logical melodrama. They lose inconclusively, with bitter casualties. Not the least imaginative touch is the characterization of the hero, Etienne Lantier, who as their leader, has demonstrated himself ardent, but indecisive and ill-informed. The visions, the slogans of revolution and utopia sound ill in his mouth.

The sermon of Zola, his collectivist sympathies, although not obstructing his art as yet, are unmistakable. Little wonder that the oppressed classes throughout the world looked now to Zola as their fearless prophet.

A letter to Henry Céard on *Germinal* (hitherto unpublished) is very pertinent here. His friend had written a warm appreciation, extreme praise in fact, pointing to the poetic tones of the book and suggesting that it might have been better, more interesting at any rate, if the author had forsaken entirely the study of individual characters and concerned himself solely with crowds and groups.

"My dear friend . . . I feel that your great friendship for me may have carried you too far. Yet I should like to take up two points in your study. The first is the abstraction of the characters, each figure reduced having but one attitude. Is that exact for *Germinal?* I do not think so. The truth is that this novel is a great fresco. Each chapter, each compartment of the composition is so closely packed that everything is seen foreshortened. Hence, a constant simplification of secondary characters, sketched in one line. But look at the major characters: each has its proper movement. A workman's brain, Etienne's, is slowly filled with socialistic ideas, a slow exasperation of suffering urges the woman,

Maheu, from ancient resignation to immediate revolt; there is a pitiful descent down which Catherine rolls, to the last degree of pain and suffering. In this design, I had thought that the large movements expressed a thought sufficiently, in imposing themselves upon the mass of the crowd. And in this sense, let me add, that I do not understand very clearly your idea that I should not have pictured distinct characters and used only crowds. My subject was the action and reciprocal reaction of the individual and the crowd, one upon the other. How could I have achieved this, if I had not had the individual?

"The second point is my lyrical temperament, my exaggeration of the truth. You have known about that for a long time. You are not astonished, like the others, at finding in me a poet. Only I should have liked to see you take apart the workings of my eye. I exaggerate certainly, but not as did Balzac, nor does Balzac exaggerate as did Hugo. We all lie more or less, but what is the mechanism and the mentality of our lying? For—and perhaps I deceive myself here—I feel that I, for my part, work in the direction of truth. I have a hypertrophy for the true detail, the starry leap from the springboard of exact observation. Truth shows a bit of its wing almost as a symbol. . . . There will be much to say about all this some day. . . ."

It is an exact appraisal of his personality: Zola, a lyrical temperament of the nineteenth century, with a hypertrophied *flair* for that which smacked of the exact, the real, the "scientifically" true. Hence the description of a painful child-birth in *La Joie de Vivre* (medically precise), side by side with scenes of sentimental devotion, or world sorrow. Hence, the lapses of taste, the "grossness." These lapses—were they existent only from the point of view of nineteenth century taste?

Zola had brought to a climax the struggle for un-morality in art. He says:

"I have described several scenes of confinement. In this connection my descriptions have been considered criminal. Literature

is full of accounts of death, disintegration, corruption. We have been told how human beings rot, but never how they come into the world. It is a contradiction which I can scarcely explain; and yet, is not the birth of a human being as mysterious, as poignant as his end? . . . They die, rob, kill in the open; but if one loved in the broad daylight one would be stoned and howled at. . . . Murder is then, more proper and less shameful than the act of generation? It is more respectable to kill a human being than to make one? . . .

"For me there are no obscene works; there are only poorly conceived and poorly executed ones.

"Our analyses can no longer be obscene from the moment that they become scientific and contribute a document——"

Zola had long planned to picture, in a novel, the life of the artists and poets of his youth. In his first genealogical tree he had even consecrated one unhappy branch, Claude Lantier, natural child of the laundress Gervaise Macquart, to the rôle of a genius. In his preoccupation with his new book he had even renounced his passion for the theater; for the dramatized version of the sordid *Pot-Bouille* had failed; the exposed bourgeois "sulked, and refused to attend. . . ." Now he even reposed himself as he wrote *L'Oeuvre,* 1886 ("The Masterpiece"), for this novel about himself and the spiritual struggles of the painters who surrounded his youth seemed obviously a more grateful task.

L'Oeuvre is filled with unblushing confidences about Zola's youth in Provence, in Paris, and with portraits of his friends. It is quite "gray" as Zola himself admitted and "passably obscure." One suffers keen disappointment at the impoverished background of two such vigorous talents as Zola and Cézanne. One wonders if there is a hierarchy of adolescence, if that of 1860-1865 is definitely of an inferior order? . . .

For there is no mistaking the figures. Searching the manuscript

for *L'Oeuvre*, we find the preparatory notes for the characters of "Sandoz," the young novelist. "*My own portrait modified, my character, my ideas.*" And it is easy enough to recognize the plans, the aspirations, the vast series of historical novels "Sandoz" is working on. The biographer, however, is compelled to use these "confessions," colored with recollections of youth and old friendships, cautiously. In his own hands Zola is a thing of sad clay. The complacent presentation of himself (as Sandoz), a proper little *bonhomme* plowing his furrow steadily, and given to rhapsodical outbursts, is the chief sin of this unhappy romance. Toward this personage the author singularly exhibited no severity and no humor.

The essential drama, however, is "the struggle of an incomplete genius with his hereditary nature . . . the struggle of a woman (Lantier's mistress and wife) against art. . . ." The story of a possessed artist agonizing over his canvases, rejected by all, brutalizing his wife and destroying himself because of a masterpiece gone wrong is all built up on the personality of the novelist's old friend, Paul Cézanne. Zola used, in fact, all his friends: silhouettes of Baille, Paul Alexis, Philippe Solari, the sculptor, and a composite of Manet and Guillemet, all appear eccentrically in their turn, to round out this novel of the "artists' quarter." But Cézanne, principal and most picturesque victim, sees himself struggling in vain against the wall of his own limitations, he sees himself "a shuddering sensibility" entangled in the purest theory, "a maddened visionary so tormented by the quest for final certainties that he is thrown into the exaltation of the unreal. . . ." It is all unquestionably meant to be Cézanne, for the manuscript notes indicate: *The studio of Cézanne—all the traits of his character.*

Out of this coincidence there has been much talk of the "Zola-Cézanne incident." There is also the fact that an estrangement dates from about 1885.

It is doubtful that Cézanne was as much incensed at this novel

as he is made to appear by the somewhat malicious Vollard. Clearly the first three chapters contain a faithful account not only of him but of the other painters who worked "for the pure love of their art—and not for the galleries." But thereafter, Claude Lantier speaks and acts purely after the pattern of the Rougons and Macquarts; his destiny, his suicide, determined long before by a "tiny lesion" in his great-grandmother's brain, follows a long pre-arranged plan.

We know that when Cézanne felt the destructive instinct overcome him, he vented it not upon himself but his paintings solely; many a masterpiece crunched under his enraged hands and hurtled into the fireplace. We know also that far from agonizing over his ultimate failure, Zola's strange "brother" lived to witness at the beginning of the present century his tardy but dazzling glory. We know that he was not an "incomplete" genius, save in the most obvious sense, that having discovered new trails and new fields, he left much for his successors to explore. Perhaps no one was more stunned than the aged Cézanne at the enormous ascendancy which his paintings took over the modern age. . . .

Emile Zola misunderstood his old playmate; quite as he failed to grasp the whole adventure of art, in the late nineteenth century, in "pure forms." When we see better the strange rich, painful era that begins with Rimbaud and ends perhaps with Picasso, we may realize that Zola's antipathy was curiously sound. . . .*

In youth his faith in Cézanne's talent had been just and instinctive; later it had bowed before the censure of contemporaries, the jeering of a Dégas, or an Alphonse Daudet, at Cézanne, as well as before the painter's irascible character. For Cézanne was difficult. It had been necessary, time and again, to patch up his quarrels with friends.

Faith in himself, confidence in his ultimate triumph, such as

* A marked reaction, or revolution, away from "pure forms" in both the plastic and literary arts is observed during the second generation of the 20th Century. Paul Valéry speaks of the retreat from "the too pure zones of art . . . the too rarefied atmosphere of the abstract."

Zola had enough of to give away to others—this he gave liberally to the often faltering Cézanne, and it is true that Cézanne, who wandered many times from his road, needed such aid. But in 1873, the day of the famous Impressionist Exhibition, Cézanne, shown beside Manet, Renoir, Pissarro and Claude Monet, needed only such a powerful thrust as Zola had given seven years before to the then unknown Manet. Zola's enthusiasm hesitated, he was on the point of writing the powerful brochure that would have launched his friend. He did not write the decisive article. The incredulous public had been more loudly scornful of Cézanne than of all the others.

Even the strongest spirit may bow for a time, when there is not a crumb of reward, when there is not a word of courage from the most intimate friend.

Cézanne had seen Zola less frequently after this period.

"You must beware of literary men," Joachim Gasquet quotes him as saying, "When they get hold of you, they finish all your painting." He was referring no doubt to the influence of the socialist Proudhon over Courbet in his later period.

In a letter, Zola indicates that Cézanne visited him for a week at the very time that *L'Oeuvre* was written. Cézanne arrived, dusty and soiled, laden with packages, many hours after the time he was expected. An odd look exchanged between the servant who admitted him and Zola at the top of a stairway—a slight delay in admitting him—disturbed the sensitive and embittered painter, and resulted in their permanent estrangement.

"There was never any anger between us," Vollard quotes Cézanne. "It was I who ceased first to go to see him. I was no longer at ease, what of the carpets on the floor, the servants, and Zola working at a desk of carved and sculptured wood. It gave me the impression in the end that I was paying a visit to some Minister of State. He had become a damned bourgeois!"

Cézanne went back to settle in Provence, rarely to return. Nearly a quarter of a century passes as he paints in complete

obscurity and—as he grew old—with a charming and peaceful contentment. He was known in Aix as a fabulous old crank. For, "Had I not been bohemian enough for forty years of my life?"

In the meantime the world outside rang with the name of his friend who enjoyed a vogue such as had scarcely ever been known before.

One day, as the malicious legends persist in relating, the great man came to Aix. Asked whether he would go to see Cézanne, the gossips relate that he replied:

"What good is there in seeing that failure?"

Zola was not a bad man, Cézanne said; he simply lived entirely under the influence of his time. It is conceivable also that he became a more and more "difficult" character, too, in the hour of his greatness. He was no longer the unrecognized genius, whom men of taste were proud to encourage. He was a menace, "a brute," who straddled his time, whose reign they longed to terminate. The publication of *La Terre* ("The Soil," 1887), brought things to a head.

La Terre—fearful book, which the pious still fear to approach—represents the full high tide of the Naturalist manner and the Zola genius; all else after it is ebb, and ebb that is sometimes shot with grandeur and sunlight, yet for the most part declining in that vague humanitarian aura which is touched with the mustiness and the discarded gas-lamps and the ugly furniture of the closing nineteenth century. But *La Terre*, written in the full ferocity of the Zola who was gross and fat and dark, more dreadful than any Dostoieffski novel of passion, epic in its horror and gloomy verisimilitude, bitter with its bleak soil and its savage faces—*La Terre* evoked the storm again of an outraged world.

One who has pursued the powerful route of the chaste Zola plowing his furrow, gathering his documents, can only imagine such a book to have been born out of the accumulation of all his anxieties, his inhibitions, his insomnias, his rages. Out of his tor-

mented nights (when Madame Zola would awake to find him standing fearfully in the darkness, unable to shut his eyes) he invents every imagined extreme of animality and violence. Out of the barrenness of his bed, which has brought him no progeny in spite of all the inclination, and all possible medical care for his wife, he evokes the dripping fecundity of his setting and its people. It is the book of a powerful, a brutal male, harassed and thwarted in his prime object.

In the spring of 1886, the Zolas in a landau drawn by two horses galloped about the Beauce country, not far from Chartres. It was the land from which his mother came, and of which she had told him much. A flat farming country, in that Ile-de-France of which Paris is the heart, inhabited by gay, rude peasants colorful in speech and grimly attached to their soil. "Our landau was a little house on wheels," Zola related, "full of documents and books and useful objects of travel. Two weeks of such tours are generally enough for me; I prefer a short and vivid impression. Sometimes, however, I return to look at the places again, in the course of my work. My wife accompanies me always. . . ." In reality Zola spent several more weeks as the guest of a rich landowner, who sent him with a letter of recommendation to his tenant farmer, saying that the visitor and his sick wife needed the air of the country. Out of the kingly luxury of Médan, the two had repaired to a little village, Romilly-en-Beauce, to sleep in a room, bare, white-washed, with only two hard beds. "And of course we ate at the table of the farmer," which was truly heroic in Zola.

Soon, having gathered his "documents," Zola set to work, groaning over the vastness of his subject. It was to be one of the most "loaded" of his novels; he worked elaborately over his plans.

The French peasants, it must be remembered, are among the most curious workers of the land in the world. A worldly greed combines strangely with an uncanny knowledge of the soil (which makes them among the finest gardeners); earthy, outspoken,

miserly and cruel, they, who formed so long the very backbone and riches of France, were born to exult the heart of Zola.

"I want to present all our peasants with their history, their morals, their rôle; I want to pose the whole social question of property. . . . Always, nowadays, when I undertake a study, I run up against socialism. I want to do for the peasant in *La Terre* what I did for the laborer in *Germinal*. Add also that I intend to remain an artist, and write the living poem of the soil: the seasons, the work of the fields, the people, the animals, the whole countryside."

Never did Zola groan so over a novel. He grew tired as it lengthened itself out, and was compelled to take a vacation. He resumed, advanced "the cursed book" slowly, finished at length one of his longest books.

The first pages described boldly a young bull fecundating his cow before the indifferent regard of a boy and a girl who were tending them. It was indeed, in a sense, a rude poem to the earth and its eternal act of life, based, Zola asserted, upon the theme of a Grecian bas-relief. Thenceforth the people, falling upon one another in monotonous and brutal concupiscence, destroying each other in their lust for their morsels of land, descending to Dostoyeffskian crime—but sans remorse—unroll a large epic in that loose prose wherein Zola chants his vague and long rhythms. In view of the limitations of the novelist's method, there is an astonishing realization of atmosphere. It is less well constructed than *Germinal* or *L'Assommoir*, yet it describes a completed arc in its more violent and fantastic gait. In the great Zola books, all the numerous characters, all the mass of details are borne in a consistent tide, incorporating episodes of perfect banality beside those of the most *outré* horror. There are pathological crimes, there is flagellant love, there are central scenes which in their fearful plausibility suggest episodes that creep into the courts and the newspapers. In its extreme fulfillment of Zola's will to observe all that was most arresting in a locality and people, all that most

aroused his somber lyrical gift *La Terre* was superb, final. For the world, for the Church, it remains his most reprehensible book. For those who seek literature in all its manifold forms *La Terre* is Zola in his strangest and angriest moods. He was essentially a poet, who only balked at the confinement of verses, or the preciosity of chiselled sentences, and thus hammered out his tremendous visions in great masses and blocks.

Opinion divided itself bitterly upon the book. Zola's friends even were shocked at its tone. The man stops at nothing! Had he not gone far enough? And Anatole France, who recognized perhaps the very valley of Beauce in which he was born, spoke in tones of horrified protest and rage, transported as his mocking and egotistic personality seldom was. No, it was preposterous. Peasants worked too hard to go rolling about the fields, fornicating. They were dignified and gentle. But, lo, every novelist in France had a peasant of his own to advance. "Why, then, is only my peasant wrong?" Zola complained.*

There was a character in *La Terre* who above all aroused the laughter and indignation of France. The most vagrant, poaching, lying, weeping, jesting scoundrel in the village of "Rognes" was nick-named *Jésus-Christ*. This is a frequent occurrence in French back-country. *Jésus-Christ* was moreover flatulent, and bombarded his enemies, bombarded the marshal who came to impound his possessions. Possessing a magic control, he could in turn fire at will, —out of gayety, sorrow, anger, tenderness—he had a nuance, a rhythm, a pattern for every mood. Let us forgive Zola his poetry over such a devil. There is not such a joyous and dangerous fellow in all the annals of literature. He is a magnificent, if malodorous fruit of Naturalistic observation, for Zola had never heard of him and his family of wild brothers before setting out in his landau for the Beauce. No, it is impossible, surely, in this case, to guard

* "There are some men," said France at this time, "whom one could wish never to have been born!" It was nearly the strongest thing ever said of Zola. France won notoriety, even, through his article in the *Temps*. A decade later, he did all in his power to make amends.

either dignity or sympathy with all the outraged Anatole Frances, René Doumics and Ferdinand Brunetières.

Europe laughed and shuddered over the book. The French Ministry which had already made the gracious gesture of offering the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor to Zola, in view of *Germinal,* unable to arrest itself, conferred the decoration upon him in the midst of the brou-ha-ha over *La Terre.*

This same bauble Emile Zola had worthily refused, but two years before, asserting that while he might have accepted it on the eve of *L'Assommoir* (nearly ten years before), he was now a veteran and deemed that it was designed for those who needed encouragement. However, events of a dramatic, even of a sensational, nature which followed rapidly upon the publication of *La Terre,* induced him to soften his attitude.

The character of Zola, utterly unknown to the great public, suffered at the hands of his confrères.

For some time the chief of the Naturalists, despite his gargantuan celebrity, caricatured in the newspapers daily, compelled to shut his door against representatives of the press, to conceal even the movements of his plans, had been growingly conscious of a muffled revolt among his followers and certain of his intimates.

During the '80s the Charpentiers, the Daudet family, including little Léon, Edmond de Goncourt and Guy de Maupassant, would come from time to time to visit the rotund oracle of Médan. In his opulence, his fatness, his amiability, for even the viperish Léon Daudet recalls how genial a host he was, Zola did not sense the limp revulsion with which Edmond de Goncourt tendered his hand, nor did he hear the mocking comments which an Alphonse Daudet uttered when his attention was elsewhere. The time passed gaily in an apparently unchanged comradeship. Goncourt licked his chops as he wrote in his Journal of the wonderful dishes he had eaten at Médan: *langues de Rennes de Laponie, soupe au blé vert, surmulet à la Provençale, pintade truffée,* etc.

In the bright afternoon, they crowded into the *Nana* and splashed around Zola's island in the Seine, under the trees, singing and buzzing as they digested their repast. Zola, letting himself go, at his ease, is now so fat that he is forced to sit with his legs wide apart. His friends brim with raillery and charm.

"And to-morrow," writes Léon Daudet, "they would all be cloven apart by rage and war. . . ."

If a Henry Bauer, and above all a Gustave Geffroy (whose criticism of works of art and literature was profoundly respected), if such men defended Zola and called him "head of the Naturalist school," they were far outnumbered by resolute and relentless enemies in the press such as the brilliant Léon Cladel, who excelled himself whenever he verged upon his pet animosity.

"The man who betrayed art to the public!" he would say. "A porker, the pig of Médan! He knows what he is doing. Making books out of the sexes of men and women. . . . And coldly! For he has no passion. . . . He is an icicle. . . . He knows only love as it has been related to him; he shoves it all pell-mell into his books. . . . Look at *Nana?* Do you believe that he ever saw for himself any of the dirty things that he narrates? They are all vile documents that he gathered in the sewers, or in garbage heaps. That man has sold lust as butchers sell tripes." *

Or, Stuart Merrill, symbolist poet of American stock, who exclaimed: "We grew up with the conviction that this man was the enemy of all art, of all beauty, all that was ideal. . . . Finding his century dominated by Hugo, he decided to be everything that Hugo was not. Hugo, Olympian . . . stood the assault of his inconsidered fury without even perceiving it. . . ." (And yet Merrill, it must be said in justice, revolutionist himself, came to worship Zola and to follow him when the hour struck.)

The stage upon which a famous literary battle was to be

* The Academicians, creators of text books, have seen to it that Zola's place in official literature remains confined and disputed, whereas, the Malots, the Feuillets, etc. are fortuitously preserved . . .

fought had begun to be peopled with new figures. A new generation was arising which resented bitterly the domination of the Naturalist school. The symbolists, Mallarmé, Laforgue, de Gourmont, Gustave Kahn, groped toward a "pure" or musical poetry (under the influence of Wagner), which the older school could scarcely comprehend. Barrès, as yet the elegant and worldly anarchist, fathered them a little, despising Zola. Rimbaud had swung briefly and obscurely across the literary sky in the early '70s, to be revived and digested a generation later. The shops were crowded with exotic novelists of small scope, like Pierre Loti, psychologists like Paul Bourget, "barbarous" Catholics, like Villiers de l'Isle Adam and Léon Bloy and Barbey d'Aurevilly. Anatole France went his own loveless way, with tact and seduction. Huysmans took the road toward the arms of the church. Rémy de Gourmont wrote of the Latin Mystics, or imitated Huysmans' *A Rebours*. Marcel Schwob and Oscar Wilde regaled themselves with the knaves and murderers of all the ages. The atmosphere was dense with literary talent: there was a multitude of voices; there was youth; there was little clarity; there were few men of outstanding force, although literature enjoyed an exaggerated tolerance and honor.

Where was the Academy? Useless to disturb "this senile institution which persists in surviving in a new age," as Zola had called it. Here, "the great modern currents which were fated to sweep them away passed by harmlessly. And there are years when one could well believe that they (the Academicians) do not even exist, so dead do they seem. And yet glory pushes our writers to aspire to it. . . . It will all collapse on the day when our more virile spirits refuse to enter a company where Molière and Balzac were scorned."

No, the real Academy could now be seen at Charpentier's shop, where beside the fireplace, a sofa was placed, which was called the "Zola-Daudet-Goncourt corner."

Aside from the "group of Médan," who still remained more or less close to the master, there was the "attic" of Goncourt.

Here the co-author of *Germinie Lacerteux*, now an unhappy sexagenarian, conducted a liberal academy, among his bibelots, the Japanese drawings, the eighteenth century relics; chagrined at the constricted fame which the time accorded him and his brother, he dreamed even of founding a greater and modern Academy with the bequest of his fortune. Thus to insure a celebrity which had been too grudgingly awarded in his own time! And so, when he was not too busily occupied crossing out and writing in the names of the beneficiaries of his Testament who were to be Academicians, he would call to his "attic" in Auteuil, the young Naturalists of talent, such as J. H. Rosny-aîné, who had just published "Nell Horn," and Paul Bonnetain, whose first novel "Charlie Amuses Himself," was about onanism, and Paul Hervieu, Lucien Déscaves, Paul Margueritte, Abel Hermant.

A beautiful old man, now, with white hair, and eternally young brown eyes, Goncourt enjoyed a certain sway over the younger men. He was not a great "talker" like his friend, Alphonse Daudet, so much as the spirit of finesse and nervousness. His words were little darts; his voice was thin; his handshake was diffident and often fled certain grips. Glory haunted him more strangely than we can now understand. He would complain petulantly over the outburst of a revolution "just when my book comes out." Convinced by Rosny of the eventual end of the world through the cooling of the sun, he wept—"Then all my forty volumes in vain!"

He could not tolerate Zola's being termed the dominant figure of contemporary literature, "chief of the Naturalists," any more than could Alphonse Daudet. He hated progress, he hated democcracy, as fervently as he hated the dramatic critic, Françisque Sarcey. . . .

"He never stopped saying hard things about Zola," says J. H. Rosny, the elder. "He became quite eloquent on this subject. He accused the father of the *Rougon-Macquart* of having largely profited by the works of others, and above all by those of the Goncourts. . . . I do not know whether Zola perceived the frowning

visage of his host when he came to the 'attic' or the slight *crispation* of the forearm which accompanied an extra-limp handshake. The master of the 'attic' detested Zola. . . ."

Alphonse Daudet seemed the dazzling figure of the circle. A handsome old man, an inexhaustible *causeur*, full of charm, full of his triumphs and ascendancy over women, generous, passionate, able to vibrate in sympathy with no matter whom or what, he was personally larger and more seductive than his books. He too hated "progress," Jews, etc., and was a traditionalist like Goncourt. Thus there would be arguments with Zola.

Emile Zola was for a long time fascinated in almost a boyish way by Daudet, in whom he felt a compatriot of the Midi, a personality whose external bravoura and éclat, whose ease in company and with women, reflected all those graces which he humbly lacked.

"Nothing in Zola's visage, his gesture, his carriage," Rosny felt, "indicated a man of the élite, save for the very fine forehead, broad and high." In turn his features were as "common" as possible; a little melancholy bourgeois, with that kind of ugliness which women dislike.

Outside of his fault of lisping (saying "We are going to Fèvres" instead of "Sèvres"), he spoke with ease and power.

"Gifted with logic, he displayed a manifest superiority over Goncourt and Daudet in discussion: he manipulated general ideas and followed up his thought—in other words he knew how to reason, and they did not." Daudet, in fact, had a horror of syllogisms, and Zola's deadly logic, his skill in sustaining a thesis as he tapped with one finger against the palm of his other hand, was enough to disconcert Daudet and to perish Goncourt.

"It is surprising," Zola would say of Daudet, "how with so much brains, he has no general ideas at all."

Of course beyond a certain abstraction, Zola himself was repelled by "metaphysics" or by what he called the "slavic fog" of the decadent youth. "One cannot deny" says Rosny coldly, in

his reminiscences of the Goncourt attic, "that he showed common sense, order in the expression of his ideas, above all in their written expression. His polemics were indeed vigorous, well constructed, eloquent, and somewhat naïve. . . . But they were impeccable for their purpose, *the conquest of the crowd.*"

The younger men of the "attic" like J. H. Rosny and Bonnetain and Margueritte, recognized in Zola an original personality, of great force, as of great creative power and sweep, "who nevertheless profited heavily from the work of others." He seemed to them "not of the scope of a Stendhal, a Balzac, a Dickens, a Flaubert, a Goncourt," yet he had the renown which was refused them, he had the great sales, which excited envy and "which swelled his glory immeasurably before the eyes of the multitude." Finally he was rated "above his true rank."

Rosny recalls his complaining as bitterly as Goncourt, of the injustice of men and the cruelty of circumstances. He deemed his success that of a misunderstood man. He awaited the verdict of posterity. He would exclaim in such amazing words:

"I am not known! . . . *I am not read!*"

At times Goncourt accused Zola before the younger men of "Machiavellian shifts." Alphonse Daudet put it more subtly. He attributed to Zola, "a perfidious cleverness, rendered more dangerous by his air of frankness, by his attitude of a gruff, downright fellow."

"Everything is swiped secretly! . . . He has a genius for *démarquage;* epic *démarquage!*" cried Goncourt, when Zola was gone.* "And no progress. Each work exactly on the same level as the others. While Daudet has never ceased to perfect himself! . . ."

"He uses all, that shark-face, all," Daudet would say. "He cannot bear having any talent escape him. He takes your talent and *puts* it into his book . . . and ends by imagining that he has invented it. . . ."

* The act of altering the labels of shop-worn goods and placing them on sale!

This "muffled warfare," as another memoirist, André Antoine, founder of the Free Theater of this time, terms it, "carried on secretly by two of the field-marshals, against their great friend," could result only in an explosion on the part of the impressionable younger men.

On the 18th of August, 1887, on the front page of the *Figaro*, there appeared in large type, the terrible "Manifesto of the Five," a resounding abjuration of Naturalism, a spectacular act of apostasy which threw them publicly against the author of *La Terre* in a brutal and calumnious denunciation conceived with such talent and informed fury as the world of letters had never before seen used for a like end. The manifesto was signed by J. H. Rosny-aîné, Lucien Descaves, Paul Bonnetain, Gustave Guiches, and Paul Margueritte. It made an uncommon hubbub; the teapots of the press simmered for months with this uprising. And yet, in its naïve manner, it marks the downfall of Naturalism and an imposing change of front on the part of Zola himself.

MANIFESTO OF THE FIVE

Until recently Emile Zola could say, without serious objection, that the young men of letters stood behind him. Too few years had passed since the appearance of Naturalism, for the rising generation to dream of revolt. Even those who were most particularly tired of his enervating repetitions of clichés, remembered clearly the impetuous breach made by the great novelist, the rout of the romantics.

We had seen him so strong, so superbly obstinate, so sturdy, that our generation, altogether weak-willed, had loved him above all for that force, that perseverance, that sturdiness. Even his peers, his precursors, the original masters who for a long time had prepared the battle ground, were patient with him for past services rendered.

However, immediately after *L'Assommoir* great mistakes had been committed. It seemed to the younger men that the master, having given the first impulse, was lagging behind, much like those leaders of a revolution whose bodies are weaker than their spirits. We had hoped for something better than for him to lie down on the field of battle; we awaited the continuation of the charge, we hoped for a new and beautiful life infused into books, the theater, overturning the senilities of art.

He, however, continued plowing his way; he continued without

fatigue, and youth followed him, with its bravos, its sympathy, so sweet to even the most stoical. He continued, and the older and wiser ones began closing their eyes, hoping to deceive themselves, and to ignore the plough of the master falling into a garbage heap. . . .

Zola, in fact, was betraying his program every day. Incredibly lazy in the sense of *personal* experimentation, armed with documents of every description collected by third persons, filled with a Hugo-esque pride, more annoying in that he had gruffly preached simplicity, he disconcerted the most faithful of his disciples.

Soon, even the least perspicacious persons had ended by perceiving the absurdity of that so-called "Natural and Social History of a Family under the Second Empire," the childishness of the famous genealogical tree, the weakness of the hereditary thread, the profound medical and scientific ignorance of the master.

Yet we refused even privately to admit our deception. . . . Only the most daring would whisper that after all Zola was not Naturalism, and that the study of real life after Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert and Goncourt was not invented by him.

However, irrepressibly, disgust spread, above all at the growing exaggeration of indecency, at the filthy terminology of the *Rougon-Macquart*. . . . A clear, irresistible impression, no longer of brutality of observation, but of a violent preference for obscenity, came to every one from the pages of the Rougons.

Then while some attributed this fact to a malady of the lower organs of the writer, to the mania of a solitary monk, others saw in it the *unconscious* development of a passion for great sales, an *instinctive* cleverness of the novelist in perceiving that the great number of his editions depended on the fact "that imbeciles buy the *Rougon-Macquart*, not so much for their literary quality as for their reputation for pornography."

Now, it is true that Zola seems excessively preoccupied (and which of us that have heard him talk is ignorant of this) with the question of sales; but it is also well-known that in his early life he had a lonely existence and laid great emphasis on continence; at first through necessity and after through principle. When young he was very poor and woman, unknown to him at the age when he should have known her, haunts him with an evidently false vision. Then the disturbance of his equilibrium as a result of his kidney malady, contributed doubtless to his anxiety over certain functions, and drove him to magnify their importance. Perhaps Charcot, Moreau (de Tours) and the doctors of the Salpétrière could make us understand the symptoms of his illness. . . . And to these morbid motives should one add that anxiety so often observed in misogynists, and even among young people whose competence in matters of love is questioned by themselves?

La Terre appeared. The disappointment was profound and painful. Not only is the observation superficial and full of outworn tricks, the narration common and devoid of character, but the note of foulness is deepened, it descends to such low filth that at times one believes it a work of scatology! The master had descended to the very depths of degradation.

Well, the game is up! We repudiate vigorously this impostor of true literature, this effort toward the mixed *gauloiserie* of a brain sick with success. We repudiate these creatures of the Zolaïst rhetoric, brutally thrown, in heavy masses, into settings seen by chance through the curtains of express trains. From this last work of the great brain which launched *L'Assommoir* upon the world, this bastard *La Terre*, we detach ourselves resolutely, but not without regret. It wounds us to repulse the man we have loved too much.

Our protest is a cry for probity, the dictates of the consciences of young men, concerned in defending their works—good or bad—against a confusion of their aims with the aberrations of the master. We are convinced that *La Terre* is not the momentary stumbling of a great man, but the accumulation of a series of downward steps, the irremediable, morbid depravity of a chaste man. We await no longer the morrow of the Rougons; we can imagine too well what will be the novels on the *Railroads* and the *Army;* the famous genealogical tree spreads its sickly branches bare of fruit!

And now let it be said once more that no hostility animates us in this protest. It would have been sweet to us to see the great man pursue his career peaceably. The very decadence of his talent does not disturb us; it is the compromising anomaly of this decadence. There are compromises which are impossible; the title of Naturalist deliberately attached to any book that touches reality cannot suit us any longer. We will face bravely any persecution in order to defend a just cause; we refuse to participate in an intolerable degeneration.

The famous formula: "a corner of nature seen through a temperament" has been transformed into: "a corner of nature seen through a morbid *sensorium.*"

It is necessary that we take a firm and dignified stand, in all the force of our laborious youth, in all the loyalty of our artistic conscience, against such a literature, that we protest in the name of sane and virile ambitions, in the name of our cult, our profound love, our supreme respect for Art! *

PAUL BONNETAIN, J. H. ROSNY, LUCIEN DÉSCAVES,
PAUL MARGUERITTE, GUSTAVE GUICHES.

* The desperate "Five" obviously drape themselves with a sanctimoniousness which brings a smile to the lips. For instance, Bonnetain, to cite only one, in his "supreme respect for art" had written—and under whose influence?—a

Zola's first feeling was of profound stupefaction. He had been accustomed to attacks by the "University" critics, and by the Catholics and conservatives; but nothing so atrocious, so diabolically aimed at the weak spots of his armor, at his physical debilities, or perhaps even, only the suspicion of them divulged to intimate friends. These insurrectionists had all the air of operating "from within." Yet who were they? The habitués of Mme. Alphonse Daudet's salon in the rue de Bellechasse, and the "attic" of Goncourt? He had known them casually; none of them had been among his intimates.

The affair aroused a prolonged uproar: joy in the enemy camp, always alive, and passionate defense in his allies. Who were these men? Who had prompted them? The press columns, the boulevards rang with literary scandal.

Zola was "interviewed" everywhere. His stand was proud and reserved.

"I know these men but slightly, some of them only by name. Had it been Huysmans or Céard, it would be different. . . . *These men formed my tail. The tail has now detached itself!*"

The deepest, inadmissible hurt must have come to him from the consciousness of who were the true authors of the action. Publicly he refused to acknowledge the source suggested by his defenders in the press. "Is it thou, Guy?" was the title of one

Naturalistic study of masturbation called, *Charlot s'amuse.* As to Zola's personality, with which they took such liberties, although knowing him little, above all with that part of his personality which lies "below the belt" they were both misled and well-informed (by Daudet and Goncourt). On the whole their intuition was excellent; their psychoanalysis a little primitive, compared to later work, but stimulating. . . . For the absurdly pompous style of the "Manifesto" its authors blushed often in later years.

The retorts of the Zolaïsts were almost equally ferocious; thus Henry Bauer in *Le Réveil:*

"So much the worse for Bonnetain! So much the worse for Descaves! You have done a villainous job there, my boys, which will rebound against you. You have forgotten that the little you amounted to was due to him; you existed only through him. All, your form, style, vocabulary, images, ideas, proceeded from him. . . . You are biting the hand of the father who engendered you, my little ones! You try to arouse the Philistines against your creator. Beware of the giant's wrath! etc. . . ."

gossipy article in the press. But Guy was going mad! It could not have been he. And others pointed at Daudet and at Goncourt with the finger of implication, rendering these gentlemen highly uncomfortable.

It has remained for nearly forty years a dark secret of literary history, with suggestions of unconsolable and devouring envy that reflects ill upon the agents provocateurs. Zola himself kept it. He wrote to his ardent champion, Henry Bauer:

"You allude to quite villainous machinations underneath, which I insist upon not believing. . . . I have always hungered for unpopularity and solitude; I have but a few friends and I hold to them. . . ."

A devoted letter from Huysmans, who as we know had already parted from Zola spiritually, was made public only a few years ago, and is very pertinent.

" . . . I have not been to Goncourt's house since his return from Champrosay (Daudet's villa), and that is the only place where one can learn all the tittle-tattle and chatter. I know, however, that the ill-bred person who directed the factum is Rosny, and that Bonnetain conceived and launched the affair. . . . The others were merely compliant. . . . Bonnetain talking about his holy respect for Art!!! . . . These brave folks are going to renew the old grudges of the Sarceys and the Schools. The whole stupid discussion of permissible words; that's what it is, the word * * * —and the word * * * offends them! . . . What idiocy! . . . I hope that you will not do them the honor of replying. They seek only publicity. . . ."

"Thanks, my dear Huysmans (Zola wrote back, August 21, 1887). I recognized the R. . . . in the tortuous pedantry of the sentences. And only Bonnetain could have started it. . . . It is all comical and dirty. You know my attitude toward insults. . . ."

In the meantime Daudet, fretting in the country over the reverberations of the affair, wrote the repudiated master a fiery letter demanding to know whether he was considered implicated and

protesting his innocence and his reverence; although Zola's statements had immediately denied such reports with the purpose of resisting a public break among the veterans of the French novel.

Zola immediately extended his hand:

"But never, my dear Daudet, did I believe that you or Goncourt had any knowledge of this extraordinary manifesto! That is what I said to the reporters, with utter conviction; the affair had fallen upon you both like a bombshell. I am amazed that you should see an implied accusation in that. Although I am the victim, you have made me culpable; instead of consoling me, you nearly break with me. Admit that that is a little too much. . . . I have never had anything against you. . . . Your letter gives me great joy, since it puts an end to a misunderstanding which has already delighted our enemies. . . ."

Perhaps he minded the impetuous and hot-headed Daudet much less than the other. Daudet amused him. Daudet's extraordinary career among the frivolous luminaries of Paris (which is reflected in so tempered and so Dickensian a manner in his books) excited his unconscious admiration. . . .

And as for Goncourt agonizing in his senile passion for "immortality" he too found it more discreet to disavow the terrible manifesto.

In the unsuppressed portion of his "Journal" he enters for August 18, 1887:

"To my great amazement, in opening this morning's *Figaro*, I find on the front page, etc. . . . What the devil! Out of the five men, four are part of my *entourage*. Daudet knew no more than I of their misdeed, committed in the most profound secrecy. And reading it over together, we found the manifesto badly done, in a style having too many pedantic terms, and attacking too atrociously the physical person of the subject."

Yet is it not most significant that Henry Céard (who had been vainly exhorted to sign the manifesto, in order to make it a significant desertion) was dropped from the list of beneficiaries or

Academicians in the famous Goncourt Testament, at this very period. . . .

Not only did Goncourt and Daudet disavow the strange affair, in which Goncourt's visit to Alphonse Daudet's country-house at Champrosay seems fatally timed with the coming of Rosny and Bonnetain to the same place; but the five authors of the "protest" all lost heart and over a period of time came one by one to make public amends and beg forgiveness.

"One evening *as we were coming back from Champrosay,* Bonnetain took me along with Descaves, to his quarters. . . ." Thus runs the account, published in his memoirs thirty-five years later, by J. H. Rosny-aîné, of this desolate adventure in which five young writers sought vainly a rapid glory. Bonnetain had had the idea of writing a resounding article against Zola, partly out of conviction, partly "with the thought of pleasing Goncourt in whom he saw the king of letters." Rosny had suggested that they make it an organized manifesto, signed by as many writers as they could get. He wrote it. The *Figaro* was enchanted with the scheme, as it would be. "It made a frightful noise; the enemies of Zola laughed; his friends overwhelmed us with insult and sarcasm; the praise was as disagreeable as the reproaches. . . . In the reaction Zola was enveloped with a fanfare of cymbals.

"I have retained a profound disgust for this poor adventure.

"What followed horrified me and was a sort of chastisement. We all had our little legend, we were the Five, five disciples who had rebelled against a Master. Nothing could have been more wounding to my young vanity. . . ."

Thus the only man who profited by the whole affair was Emile Zola?

One of the first reactions in him was his final acceptance of the Legion of Honor award which he had been refusing for some time. The delicate matter of conveying it to him was entrusted to a person who understood him completely and enjoyed his utmost

confidence, Mme. Georges Charpentier. She went expressly to Médan on this mission.

The minister Edouard Lockroy, who had long known Zola, now wished to carry out his retarded "elevation," as if to console him in this hour of treason.

"But it is mad!" Zola exclaimed to Mme. Charpentier. "You forget the letter I wrote to the previous minister! I shall cover myself with ridicule."

She insisted. She argued excellently. It was time to act against the reproach of immorality with which his work was burdened. Official recognition would remove this blot in the eyes of the crowd. Think it over, she concluded.

Suddenly he decided.

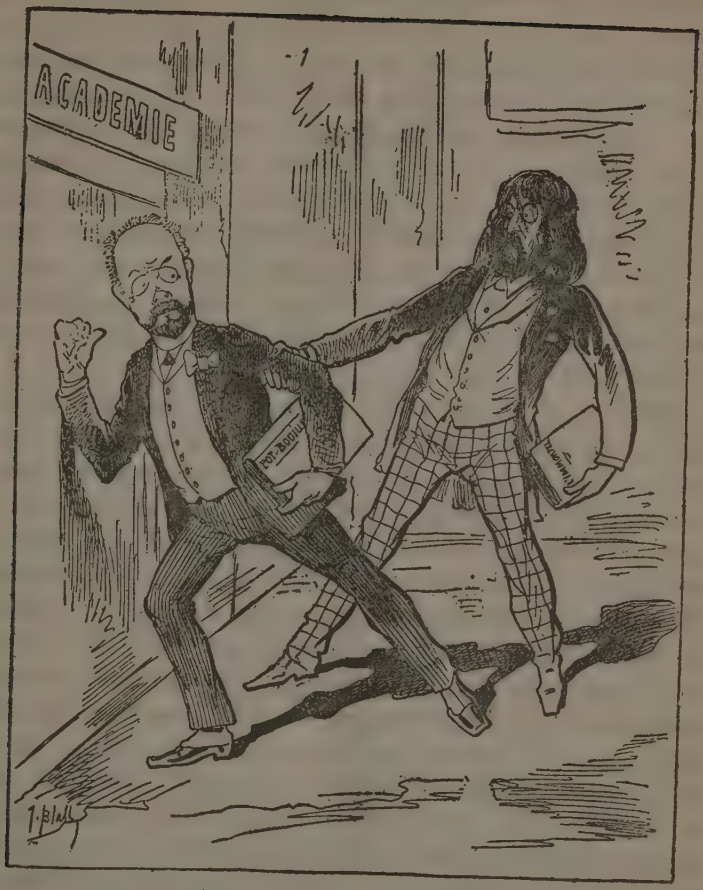
"I accept. . . . But on one condition, that you bring the formal agreement of the minister to me this very day."

The devoted friend rushed to Paris from Médan, with his ultimatum. She extracted the written agreement at once despite political opposition, which nearly caused the demission of the minister. At length Lockroy decorated the novelist in the salon of his friend, who never ceased to wonder at the ease with which she had conquered Zola's scruples.

She was even more surprised the following week, when he met her and burst out: "You could never imagine where I come from. Halévy's. . . . I have just announced my candidacy for the French Academy!"

And as she remained thunderstruck, he explained: "I had two ways that I could have followed: the official path or the other one. I never thought of the former, till you introduced me to it. Now I shall follow it through to the end. You know I am the sort of fellow who never stops half-way. . . . The die is cast. I shall be a knight of the Legion of Honor, then a Senator, since there is a Senate. And since there is an Academy, I shall be an Academician."

In his wounded pride, in the torment of desires and self-



DAUDET TO ZOLA:

"If I Cannot Enter the Academy, Neither Shall You!"

knowledge which this crisis had provoked, he visioned a new stage of brilliant public action grafted upon his long and glorious career. To sanctify the school he had founded, after the reproaches and insults, with an official crown . . . to become a Senator, an Academician. To emerge from his solitude, to play a part in the life of the Republic, to place himself "at the head of the movement of progress," . . . to lead it even perhaps to Socialism (for this was becoming a conviction with him), toward, at any rate, an era of greater justice, freedom and collective happiness. For he had too long been solely the Naturalist, probing social sores. It was all too dour, too depressing. He must finish the cursed Rougons soon, and seek another direction for the quenchless energies he felt in himself, the "force. . . ."

Ah! that weird, that "baroque manifesto" had attained him; certain darts which turned in the most intimate recesses of his personality goaded him now. He knew the debt he owed life, he who had lived only *vicariously*, who had been all sedentary, all observer. Had he not tormented himself enough in his nights of insomnia, with the thought of the physical barrenness of his life? "To make a book, to plant a tree, to have a child . . ." that, he had said so often, was the sum total of a true life. Well, he was rounding out quite a book; he had planted a tree, too, the famous genealogical one of the Rougons; and there remained only something more, for which he had hitherto been inept? . . . To live still, to round out his life! Was there time yet? Alexandrine would be fifty in another year, and he forty-nine. All efforts in that direction had failed. The fruitless chase for doctors, the wanderings about health-resorts. . . . He had loved her, returning her great passion. She had held him long enough to her barren bed. There was only to live now; only youth to seek. His eyes fell on some one quite near. . . .

A great and decisive change came over Emile Zola, which the world witnessed with amazement, with laughter, and with as little understanding as ever.

CHAPTER XIII

ZOLA THIN: AN AUTUMN LOVE

"Ah! la jeunesse! Il n'y a que la jeunesse. . . ."
"A eux deux, la jeunesse en fleur, la force mûre, si saines, si gaies, si heureuses, ils firent un couple rayonnant."
". . . Le vieux Roi David, c'était lui, et c'était elle Abisaïg, la Sunamite."

At Royan, during the months of September and October, 1887, where Zola had gone for a vacation, he received his friend Henry Céard, who recalled with amazement having seen Zola idle! The "Manifesto of the Five," as Céard related, "seemed to bother him very little, and for the first time in long years the great novelist let himself go, abandoned himself, as he admitted, to the joys of laziness."

Sluggishness is an excellent mask. Moral suffering always made Emile Zola assume a stubborn, a phlegmatic expression. . . .

This was the epoch when Zola became thin, when he came to love music, socialism, youth, young girls. . . .

One day the bourgeois of Médan looked long at himself in the mirror and saw that he was fat. He thought that it was not good; he was becoming an old and fat man. Was he finished?

And one evening, at Antoine's Théatre Libre, in the crowded

lobby, he was hailed by Raffaelli, the painter. Attempting to get through the crowd toward his friend, he was sorely crushed. Impossible to squeeze by these people with such a belly. The pressure, the heat upon his hypersensitive flesh tickled and exasperated him, so that he almost cried out with pain. When he was at length beside Raffaelli, he was panting, beads of perspiration stood upon his tall brow. These days the slightest exertion put him out of breath; with his 46-inch waistline and 192 pounds he suffered at times from gastric dilatation.

"It is miserable to have a paunch like this!" he groaned to the painter.

"Do you know, you can reduce it quite simply," said Raffaeli. "You merely have to give up drinking liquids while you eat."

It was what was known as the Schweininger cure. Zola took it up with determined enthusiasm.

At breakfast the next morning, he said to Madame Zola:

"No coffee for me! I am reducing."

"But it is senseless!" she cried. "How can you do without drinking?"

Being contradicted and reproached by his wife was all that Zola needed. He eschewed even the moderate quantity of wine and water he took with his meals. He held to his régime steadfastly of eating without liquids, and finishing during the day, between meals, a quart of weak tea. Within three months he had lost some thirty pounds.

He was seeing very few people at this time. When his friends encountered him after an interval they were thunderstruck at the change in his appearance, in fact overcome by fear for his rapid extinction.

"It is absolutely a fact," Goncourt commented, "that his stomach has collapsed, and his figure is as if elongated, stretched out. And what is most curious of all is that the fine modeling of his face in the past, lost in the round and gross visage of recent

years, is refound, and he truly resembles again the portrait of him by Manet."

A few months later again, and he was unrecognizable.

—J. L. Forain

THE TWO ZOLAS:

The Thin Zola: "I Wrote 'The Dream'; That Swine, There, is the Fellow Who Did 'Nana.'"

"A gentleman passed me at Charpentier's whom I failed to recognize at first," relates Goncourt. "It was Zola; no longer with the head of Manet, but with great hollows in his cheeks, an immense forehead under hair brushed straight back, so that I passed him without greeting him."

The reducing of Zola assumed the sensational importance of

a political event. For a time all the salons of Paris whispered only about this and also the increasing insanity of Guy de Maupassant. "They spoke gravely of it—above all Zola himself."

It was somewhat comical, this physical transformation of the most celebrated writer under the Third Republic.

Nor was the change merely physical. It was said that the master of Médan felt himself alert, young again; that he accosted the youthful sons of his colleagues with: "How old are you?" gazing sternly into their eyes. "Twenty?—Ah! my good friend, to say that one is twenty! Ah, if I could be twenty years again! . . . Live! young people! Live, while we philosophize . . ." And then, as these colored and frequently suspect legends have it, there were also hymns to love. "Love! young people. Love each other. I tell you it is only love that is worth the trouble of living. Love is the sole liberty, the great redemption!"

And indeed, at this time, when Zola was growing thin and Maupassant mad, and the nineteenth century drawing to its long close—there were some celebrated love affairs among the grandsons and grand-daughters of Victor Hugo, of Gautier, the son of Alphonse Daudet. . . . The Parisian conversation at Mme. Charpentier's salon, and at Mme. Menard-Dorian's, where Zola also went, sparkled with them.

And suddenly, having drunk of the Fountain, the Master of Médan discovered "the true young girls," as his tittling contemporaries recall his saying it, "with a mien at once grave and gourmand."

"For a moment with Zola," Goncourt enters into his "Journal" —he saw him more and more rarely—"I spoke of our life devoted to letters, given perhaps as it was never given before, by anybody at any period, and we avowed ourselves truly martyrs of literature, perhaps abandoned beasts of toil. And Zola confessed *that in this year, almost his fiftieth, he was taken again by a renewal of life, youth, a desire for material joys*, and, interrupting himself suddenly, remarked: 'Yes, I never see a young girl

pass by—like that one—without saying to myself: Isn't that worth far more than a book!' "

During the period of 1887-92, the thinning of Zola coincided with the disintegration of the "School of Médan," the decline of Naturalism, a change of ideals in the master toward utopianism, and, simultaneously, with the secret upheavals of his domestic life. The collapse of Zola's famous stomach fixes itself historically at the time of Wagner's ascendancy in music, Mallarmé's in poetry, the advancing socialist movement, the Boulanger crisis, the sinister glory of Oscar Wilde. . . .

"Zola fat played the austere character, the moralist, the 'chaste' man," observes a memoirist of this luxuriant period. "Zola thin, relaxed, abandoned himself, and soon the mournful and prosaic derangement of his domestic life, became the fable of our circles. I go no further having a revulsion for scandalous anecdotes and indiscretions"—it is Léon Daudet, the notorious, the shameless one who speaks—"I call to your attention only that the memory of Victor Hugo and of his two households never ceased to haunt Zola; for, the pretended, *fecal* innovator had an extremely curious instinct for imitation. . . ."

In the somber mansion of the rue de Bruxelles, to which the Zolas had moved in 1888, and at Médan, a biblical romance, indeed, both beautiful and terrible had suddenly bloomed.

Alexandrine Zola, in whose personality one finds such a wide emotional gamut, was of a stout health such as prolonged her years to the grand number of eighty-seven. Yet one finds her, over a long stretch of time, as evidenced in her husband's letters, attacked by anxieties, "suffering" subject to "cures," chasing to watering resorts. The inferences (as much as they can be in such a dubious terrain) are only too clear. . . . Repeatedly, friends who visited the vast and winged villa of Médan came away with a sense of its silence, somberness, loneliness.

By suggestion and contagion, doubt and rending anxiety attacked the master. No, it was not the ridiculous taunt of *chastity!*

That a man should pass a quarter of a century by the side of a volcanic spouse, a perfect "tragedy queen," is indicative only of a splendid simplicity in such matters, of single-mindedness, of a horror of such amorous equivocations, such facile complexity as he saw strewn all about Paris in the extra-domestic careers of the Catulle Mendès, the Alphonse Daudets, the Maupassants. Yet the strange legends went on living—child of the romantic era—that a great poet, a great romancer, must be a great and voluminous lover too. The abandonment of pious domesticity, of religious illusions, of asceticism, which was so much traceable to Naturalism itself, all these modern tendencies came back to flaunt the father of the Rougons.

"To live!—I know—to live one's life—we ourselves are to blame for such notions!" he had exclaimed long ago to Huysmans and Alexis. But, no! He had refused the implication as far as he himself was concerned. He had clung to the duality of his life: experience continued *vicariously* in his books, projected with a boldness, a spread-of-wings he could never bring himself to essay in person.

Yet the five intoxicated manifestants had more than they dreamed, attained his sore places. One rejects indignantly the quixotic conception of a Zola before oncoming senility, rushing out in quest of off-spring! But to be accused of impotence is surely maddening enough to evoke some form of response, if only a bitter communing with oneself. And—extreme of insolence—to have one's whole conception of art, one's whole manner of expression, ascribed to a psychosis, the brutalizing reaction from fears and doubts of one's *capability!*—No, it was impossible in the council of one's own soul to abide such a tormenting challenge! The frenzied group of young Naturalists, Rosny, Déscaves, Margueritte, etc.—were they not curious forerunners of a certain Sigmund Freud and of a formulated theory called "psychoanalysis," which is ancient, ancient? . . .

And so it was at this time, when the "great creator" who

had peopled so many books with life, who had displayed such monstrous artistic virility, was now harassed by cruel mockery and doubt both as to his mission in life (hitherto so surgical) and his manliness, and no little by the boredom of completing his colossal epic—it was at this time that his troubled eyes fell upon someone quite near. It was within "his own tent" veritably one of his servitors, the person who with her own hands ministered him, prepared his food and brought it to him. . . .

Jeanne Rozerot was a youthful person, scarcely twenty, of a severe and uncommon beauty. Tall, gray-eyed, white complexioned, it was with a certain innocence and freshness that she had come up from the provinces, having but recently learned her vocation, to serve in the household of the great author. The impression subsists that her character was above her station, as was her beauty; that she was somewhat devout, sensible, intelligent if not educated. Her subsequent ability to rise to her new level, as consort to the veteran novelist, to conduct herself with discretion, with charm in the face of suffering, attests these qualities.

Zola, dominated in his ripened years by such an emotion as he had only resisted in the past, flung himself upon the young girl, tremulous and cowering with his inhibitions and desires. The gift of her youth, her innocence filled his heart with a humility, a gratitude that is mellow and touching to witness, his mind with a tumult and dazzlement that had long reverberations.

All work is flung aside by the whole-hearted lover. Two years elapse before the next of the Rougons appears. At first, he virtually locked himself up, saw no one, showered only Jeanne Rozerot with his boundless affection, gifts, jewels. In *Docteur Pascal** the concluding novel of the *Rougon-Macquart*, the atmosphere of this whole episode is deeply evoked. "She adored jewels, she was surprised and ravished at his gifts. . . . Her womanly coquetry was deliciously pleased by them; she let him offer his

* The "Sketch" for this novel, with its reference to the living models, disappeared from the collection of Zola Mss. later donated to the National Library.

ZOLA'S "DREAM"—J. L. FORAIN.

love upon his knees, knowing that it was only an exalted form of love. . . ." He, oblivious to all else, "is carried away by a veritable folly . . . an imperious desire to prove to her that he thought of her always, a pride in seeing her more magnificent, more envied, happier than all others. . . ." Zola, who spent his money with reputed difficulty, indeed showered Mlle. Rozerot with his largesse. "These two—youth in flower, and ripened force—so healthy, so gay, made a dazzling couple."

"Oh, your youth! Your youth, for which I hungered, and which nourishes me! . . . But you, so young, are you not hungry for youth, for having taken me, so old, old as the world?" Thus Dr. Pascal.

"You, old?" cries Clothilde. "Ah, no, you are young, younger than I! I have only one hunger and one longing, to be loved above all things as you love me."

And she draws a picture, with brush and color, of a biblical scene: the "old king David and Abisaïg, the young Shunamite. . . . He reigned . . . leaning with his arm upon the shoulder of Abisaïg, . . . this favored subject, this maid so proud to have been chosen, so ravished to give to her king the healing and renewing blood of her youth. . . ."

Zola had installed Mlle. Rozerot in an apartment on the rue du Havre, a few steps around the corner from the rue de Bruxelles. In the summer, she stayed at a little cottage in Verneuil, the village adjoining Médan. There were excursions. "In the expansion of their joy they felt the need of space. . . ." In sport costume, and on one of those bicycles-built-for-two, which were so adored and so fashionable toward 1890, they took spins through the Saint-Germain forest, along the River Seine, toward the Croix de Noailles and the Achères road . . . "Thus, they enjoyed a happy possession, a happy idyll." Zola thin—Zola a giddy lover—small wonder that everyone spoke of the "new Zola."

When Mme. Zola perceived what had come about during

those hours in which she left her spouse to the long practiced solitude of his labors, nothing could contain her grief and her stormy resentment. In this divorceless era, in Catholic and "continental" France, where so many virtuous wives of illustrious artists had learned, perforce, to wink tolerantly at the frailties of their husbands, she was of another and angrier stuff. With typical forgetfulness of her own "past" she filled the house with clamors and menaces. What had the fame of her husband brought to her? Less and less affection with the passing years, coolness, absorption only in his own career; and now with the very crest reached, after all their common vows and suffering,—only betrayal and shame! No there would be no tranquil submission to the scheme of a twin household, something which could mean only the preëminence of "that adulteress!" Zola's ears were deafened with the din; the rue de Bruxelles and the halls of Médan clanged with such a sordid and secret bourgeois closet drama as the creator of the Rougons had pictured so often!

A letter of the time, to Santen-Kolff, March 6, 1889:

". . . It is true that I am undergoing a crisis, the turn of my fiftieth year no doubt. But I trust that I may some day turn it to the profit and the honor of literature.—Pardon my long silence. There are weeks, months, when there is a tempest within me, the tempest of desires and regrets! . . ."

When in the spring of 1889, it became apparent that Mlle. Rozerot was to become a mother, the joy of Emile Zola touched the skies, while the rage of the tragic Alexandrine Zola became sinister and unreasonable. . . .

The birth of his first child, a girl, Denise, September 20, 1889, was an event over which Zola seemed bedazzled and intoxicated. "He seemed to bloom virtually anew," observed Henry Céard, god-father of Denise.

And so the two households went their busy way, the one full of griefs and violences, the other offering a deep contentment and renewal. He was an impassioned father, who delighted himself

in every stage of his child's growth. His biological potency, now demonstrated, now justifying from the point of view of nature his whole existence, caused a curious association in his mind; revived joy in the common things of life, a conviction that life could be good for everybody, if they could but be accorded these simplest facilities for working, loving each other and fecundating. Amorousness without the purpose of offspring was sheer adultery. In the complete happiness (not without shadow) that attended thus the utter fulfillment of all his physical and spiritual needs, in this changing, glittering hour of joy, the husk of the old dour anatomist fell away, and one could see only an optimistic, socially-conscious, constructive, utopian spirit in its stead. The old methods, to be sure, the materials selected long in advance were employed to complete the last four volumes of the *Rougon-Macquart*. We witness again a period in which these motives "set" themselves—yet it is no less true that Zola had turned crusader and evangelist long before 1893, when he wrote *Lourdes*, or 1898 when he wrote *J'accuse* and *Fécondité*.

Zola-thin was not as strong physically as Zola-fat; the world also liked to think that he was less gross, less pessimistic, less careening and smashing, less the "shark"—no longer "the passionate and lyrical accent" that had enchanted and terrified the youth of a whole generation. The new qualities, the new dreams are foreshadowed at this time.

If, as Dr. Toulouse reported, in his extraordinary medical and psychological examination of Zola,* he was less strong, he was no less energetic, and after the interlude indicated, flung himself into an even larger and more ferocious schedule of labor. Work! Work! It was the time when he traveled about publicly, either as a public figure (President of the Society of Men of Letters), or in response to direct gestures of honoring him; it was the time when his books indicate more and more direct public action

* Enquête Médico-psychologique sur les Rapports dè la Supériorité intellectuelle avec la Névrosité, Dr. J. Toulouse (1896).

(*L'Argent, La Debâcle*), when he emerged more and more from his seclusion, when he was banqueted and fêted, popular almost as a political personage. And yet there was time for a voluminous correspondence, for experimenting with Bruneau in the field of the opera—who realizes now that Zola wrote opera-librettoes?—and for continual efforts to push the modern drama through Antoine, the embattled founder of the Free Theater in France. With all this, there was time nevertheless for the two households as well, the hysterical, haunting one of the rue de Bruxelles, the gay one of the rue du Havre around the corner. . . .

The purely literary quality of Zola's work has already begun to decline, for us, at this period. The twenty years between *Thérèse Raquin* (1867) and *La Terre* (1887) had given surely an enormous contribution, whose literary value, contested or accepted to the extreme, has still to find its exact appraisal.

I pass over the last novels of the Rougons. *Le Rêve* ("The Dream," 1888), dating still from Zola's fat period, was the purest, bluest fantasy, in which Zola had sought to show that he could speak of devoutness and young-girlhood with delicacy and tenderness. This child, Angélique, to return to the theme of heredity once more, was a pure flower sprouted in the evil soil of the Rougons, as often happens. *Le Rêve* had to be written, because Zola had menaced us twenty years before in his plan, with giving "every case of heredity known" in one huge family; *Le Rêve,* with its message of love and pure death, with its rapturously uplifted pages, had to be written because *La Terre,* with its brutal images of animality, *had just been written.* This is a far more penetrating view of Zola's personality than that of the often suggested and more obvious motive: Zola in genuflection before the French Academy, seeking to bend the stern disapproval of those aged gentlemen. Extremes followed extremes in him. After *Le Rêve* came *La Bête Humaine* ("The Human Beast"), published in 1890, after the uncommon lapse of two years.

The impenitent Zola, holding unshakably to his long plan, carried out now his projected novel on "railroad life," one of the most morbid, and most clinical of his novels. Jacques Macquart, who does not originally appear in the old genealogical tree, is a sadist through atavism. The sex instinct in him is linked with the lust to kill, to strangle "those lovely white throats. . . ." He is Jack-the-Ripper incarnate, and was forcibly suggested by colorful newspaper chronicles of the time. The book is drenched with blood and mental aberrations. The "human beast" it must be related, is Lison, Jacques' pet locomotive, and his supreme crime is committed, in an access of destructive passion, by launching this superb mechanical animal off the tracks and into "the blue."

After the "railroad novel" Zola wrote *L'Argent* ("Money," 1891); a story of frenzied finance and stock gambling, with its inevitable message of socialism. Knowing nothing whatsoever about the business of the Bourse, within a few months he assimilated his knowledge well enough to give an accurate picture of this world.

"It was a huge job," Zola confessed. He was not very happy over this book, he told his friends, "but one mustn't say this too loud, for it might spoil things. . . . In short, Money is a good vehicle for action, but on the whole there is too much money in it."

Indeed, many of the Rougon novels virtually *write themselves.* Having mastered the literary process of Zola, as indicated by his manuscripts of plan and sketches,* many of us could achieve a fair specimen of a documented novel, throwing in a few fine medical cases at the proper turn, and including a certain amount of entertaining information. The Jules Verne side of Zola, the facile documentation, to no small extent accounts for his rivaling that author in popularity. The showman in Zola realized clearly that great numbers of people enjoyed receiving informa-

* *Cf.* Appendix. "Zola's Technique."

tion, at low cost, about factories, department stores, the stock exchange, etc. . . .

There is a certain lack of conviction, with which these novels succeed each other; a sense of their repetition, their faults, are exhaled from the pages of the author's correspondence.

"I have a furious desire to terminate my series," to Charpentier August 27, 1889. "I want to be rid of it by January 1892. It is possible if I dig hard . . . I feel as I did when I was twenty, and I wanted to gobble up whole mountains . . . Ah! my friend, if I were young again, you would see what I would do. I would astound the world!"

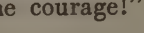
There was only the book on "the army" and the one about the "scientist" needed to complete the interminable Rougons, as he now told Goncourt. In the war book, "a sensitive man would be pictured undergoing the Siege and the Commune. . . . But at bottom the book which has the most charm for me, is the last, in which I shall present a scientist whom I shall be tempted to fashion after Claude Bernard, through his papers and letters . . . It should be diverting. I will have him married to a retrograded woman, who bigotedly destroys his impious work as fast as he accomplishes it." *

"And afterward, what will you do?"

"After that, the wisest thing would be to do no more books, to abandon literature, . . . to pass on to another life, deeming the old finished."

"But one never has the courage!"

"It is very possible."



The book on the army absorbed, nay drowned Zola. *L'Argent* with its portraits, among other things, of certain unscrupulous Jewish financiers, had bored him. *La Débâcle* ("The Downfall"),

* This plan is later adapted in a more personal and original manner.

with its vast material, embracing the most burning political question in France, involved him in prodigious and impassioned labor.

It has often appeared that Zola in his zeal to play the spokesman of the scientific spirit, enjoyed countering traditions, popular prejudices or beliefs with the most dramatic iconoclasm. It is thus that many have explained Zola's excessive breaches with popular sentiments of "good-taste." Among a vast portion of his compatriots such a code, whatever illusions the outside world may guard of France, is adamant. Zola's headlong élan, his virtually un-human will to resist such institutions, as he wrapped the mantle of the savant about him, can scarcely be estimated unless we take fully into account the factor of reverential inertia in France, as elsewhere. Thus the answer of the Grundys, in view of his ponderous blows at Church and Army, was: "He does not know us! He could not do this otherwise! *He is not French.*" This, above all, is the terrible weapon of criticism, the last retort.

But there is another side to his "pitiless documentation": "They will call me an enemy of France," he had told the Italian writer, Edmondo de Amicis, in 1880, in speaking of his first plans for a war book. Ha-ha! then he knew fifteen years before he undertook to document himself in what sense his investigations would lead him! There was, after all, a set of *a priori* convictions indicated continually by certain drum-words, Republic, Truth, Justice, Love? . . .

The field expeditions of the novelist were becoming more and more spectacular affairs. The Parisian press sought to learn his objective in advance and sent a flock of reporters after him. He was more and more hampered by the efforts of well-intentioned persons to enlighten him or to misguide him in his tracking down of the "truth." The old "shark" now had a school of harassing small fish, a mass of entangling weed, to evade. He complained as he worked over *La Débâcle*, to his friend Santen-Kolff (January 26, 1892), "of the tormenting curiosity which his journey

to Sédan excited." It was necessary more and more to resort to short-cuts, to intuition. . . .

Ignoring even the adverse conditions of his labor, his deep straining after truth appears singular and *genial.* He made his inquest into the national disaster of 1870 on broad lines: he interviewed officers, privates, peasants, intellectuals who had enlisted; he read many letters, both illiterate and informed. He went over the battlefields for days with a guide. "The experiences undergone" by participants of highest and lowest station, he announces triumphantly, "all resemble each other, all convey an absolute uniformity of impression." This universal impression would form the very basis of his *Débâcle.*

His plan was determined. He partook of the belief that France, the whole rotted Empire, was ripe for the downfall. "The French skipped the camp; the Germans poured in," as Octave Mirbeau put it. The people were never awakened. Else how would the sons of the "grand armies" have succumbed so easily. And on the other side there was "science" in the handling of mass and superiority of artillery; superb direction against the faltering leadership of nullities like Marshal MacMahon, and complacent traitors like Marshal Bazaine. The brief but bloody battles, with their flashes of despair and heroism, the siege of Paris, the Communes, the civil war, the bloody crash of the Empire all made a highly satisfactory dénouement for the *Rougon-Macquart.*

"I have divided the work into three parts of eight chapters each. The first will comprise the early defeats on the Rhine, the retreat toward Sédan. The second part is entirely consecrated to the battle, which is described in some two hundred pages. The third will tell of the siege, the ambulances, the siege of Paris, the Commune, under which the end comes in a blood-red sky. . . . When I attack a subject like this I want to push the whole world into it. Hence my torments, *my desire for enormity and totality.*"

It is possible that in response to the suggestion of sympathetic critics like Henry Céard, the novelist here sought to treat a

mass, an army, as his hero instead of individuals. It had long been commented that his aptitude was particularly for working on such a scale. Thus the personages are more than ever before reduced to a few vague traits, while in recompense the long book becomes a panoramic vision of a whole people engaged in war. It is the most *documented* of all the novels; the historical documents intrigue the author above all. He abandons himself to torrential descriptions, which have an important doctrine or tendency to convey: the tragic charge of a cavalry division, the movement of an artillery company, the defense of a town, drives, retreats, the inferno of a hospital. Faithful to his substance, he ignores to a perilous extent the structure of his novel as a piece of literature, while not having perfected a scheme for treating an army consistently as his principal. (Had he done this he would not only have foreshadowed, but completely preceded, the "unanimistic writers" of the present century.) The tension of *La Débâcle* falls in the center—as the work prolonged itself formidably beyond original plans—to reach a crescendo in the closing picture of the Commune, where the action is pictured through individuals rather than through crowds.

For the partisans of Zola gross or "fat," it is *La Débâcle* which marks precisely the turning point where he abandoned literature *per se*, in favor of the truths or certitudes which he had been tracking these many years and was now resolved to thrust down the throats of the public. In this "thin," evangelical Zola—I prefer to place the change here rather than at the end of the Rougon-Macquart series—there is less vigor, eloquence, breadth than in the ferocious, possessed, curiously esthetic author of *Le Ventre de Paris* and *La Terre*, whom one regrets. It is a far cry from Balzac and Flaubert.

The value of a work like *La Débâcle* is to be judged upon other desiderata: those of the "social document," of "morality in action." In the most purely literary work of Zola there is an unconsciously *perverted*, quality, if one may say so, ranging from the

Baudelairean to the Rabelaisian. With its nightmares, its fatalism, its bitterness, its obsession with sexuality, its unrestrained raillery, it forms a unique literary corpus.

Suddenly, in the period I have just treated—and allowing always the interval for the "setting" of new emotion-habits—it is as if an imprisoned demon has been released. The bile, the inexplicable blackness that thrilled us in the writings of the "chaste Zola," lonely and childless—the "dark poet" of French prose—all these enchanting, repulsive and "literary" qualities subside largely; the other qualities, always present, become from now on visibly dominant.

Humanitarian, crusader, polemicist, utopian, preacher (of almost the circus variety)—this new character emerging is that of the "thinner," the more popular, the more elegant male. He is now sated, assured (of his potency), bathing in a renewed and ripened sensuality, in the joys of fatherhood, and the anxieties of a double household. Zola at fifty, issuing from the more or less "ivory tower" of Médan to "make speeches," reveling in his social and masculine power, turns evangelist and prophet; a prophet, whose faith in the New Church, or the New University, is no less biblical and Oriental, than his domestic life. His novels become largely "pure" in measure with their growing evangelism and significantly in time with his new voluptuousness: there is a subsidence of the theme of animality. The quest of fatherhood may have appeared in turn trivial, suspect; but in the end, must we not say, it became ennobling? It had enormous repercussions, a far-flung course, a fulfilled, rather than a vicarious life. Ah, Jeanne Rozerot! to have played your concealed, but strategic part in the great Naturalist novel of this man, and then to have departed, obscure, accused, heart-broken, at an early age. In September, 1891, as Zola boarded the large new struggle with *La Débâcle*, he had become the father of a second child; a son, Jacques Emile-Zola. . . .

A novel such as *La Débâcle* must be rated as social action,

How well it "told the truth about the whole frightful catastrophe in which France nearly perished," how well-timed its message was with the initial growth of a world movement against wars is attested by the prolonged reverberations over five continents. In the embittered era of "*la revanche*" the army was more sacred to French patriots than the Church, the Law, the Home, all of which this "traitor," this "muck-raker," had "befouled" in turn. The outcries of "treason" and "shame," the accusations (that he was the tool of the Germans, the English, the Freemasons, the Jews), were more clamorous than ever before. The editions mounted in pace with the frenzy of newspaper cartoons. To Zola's joy, *La Débâcle* rapidly surpassed even *Nana* in sales; its widely heralded translations made him now the most famous author in the world, more read even than his great Russian contemporary, Tolstoy.

The rage of the nationalist press against Zola did not subside for many years. It was a just and significant commentary, when five years later Zola joined a famous cause, that "he had never been popular in spite of his millions of readers."

One of the most "unpatriotic" aspects of his book was the manner in which he devoted as much space to hospital scenes as to scenes of battle. Scores of pages in the heart of the book recorded exactly the labors of the temporary military hospitals erected back of the front, the hellish congestion of expiring and mangled soldiers. The work of a surgeon prostrated by his task, becomes more real, more heroic than that of an artillery officer. Thus the detachment of shoulders, legs, the hopeless struggle against infection, are described ardently and make a fine charnel-house picture.

It was not only the partisans of the French army who could not stomach the book. Even German professional soldiers protested!

How typical of the moods of the time is the large publicity given in France to a letter from a Bavarian officer, Captain Tanera, a combatant and eye-witness:

"It is the act of a bad Frenchman. . . . A German has come forward to reprimand him and teach him a lesson in patriotism by rendering to the valiant soldiers who died for France the homage which Monsieur Zola should have accorded."

Zola's reply in the *Figaro* was very strong; in his best forensic vein. What gross mockery, that the verdict of this man, who it appeared had executed "irregular" men and women defenders at Bazeilles, and set a torch to the town, should have been tolerated. His own book was the work of a friend of France, etc. . . .

The accuracy of Zola's picture, the justice of his complaint and warning, was not successfully challenged by even the highest officers of the General Staff. And strangely it won to his side certain habitual public opponents, such as Anatole France, who said: "He does not exaggerate at all. . . . No one could have pushed further the illusion of reality." France finally was judging Zola's work as social action, and the step led to the reconciliation of the two men.

Paul Margueritte, one of the signers of the "Manifesto of the Five," whose father could be seen in *La Débâcle* leading a fatally heroic cavalry charge, retracted in a letter of March 12, 1892:

"Let me seize this occasion, I could not find a better one, to unburden myself before you, in all frankness, of a regret which has weighed upon me for a long time. In associating myself with that manifesto against you several years ago, I committed a misdeed whose extent my extreme youth prevented me from understanding. I have come to understand better, the respect one owes, as man to man, to a life of crushing toil, of proud combat and example like yours.

"It is a long time since I have desired to write you this, dear Monsieur Zola . . ."

The author of *La Débâcle* answered most gracefully:

". . . I have guarded no rancor. I was extremely touched

by your good and noble letter. Believe me your cordial and devoted.

Emile Zola."

Not only men of letters, but politicians like the socialist leader Jaurès, the anti-clerical Clemenceau, the "opportunists" Raymond Poincaré and Bourgeois came to recognize the Voltairean character of Zola's literary action. It is amusing to note that one of Poincaré's early essays in literature was an appreciation of Emile Zola.

At a dinner *chez* Daudet, with whom relations had been patched up, it is observed now, that he "bears no longer the dolorous complaining air of other times. Today he has in his walk, in his words, something energetic, bitter, the essence of the fighter. And in his words there recur the names of politicians, Bourgeois, Constant, with whom he has been corresponding or has seen, revealing in him a curious invasion of political ambition."

François Coppée arrives, tanned from his vacation at the seashore, with his green-blue eyes, looking like an old sea-wolf.

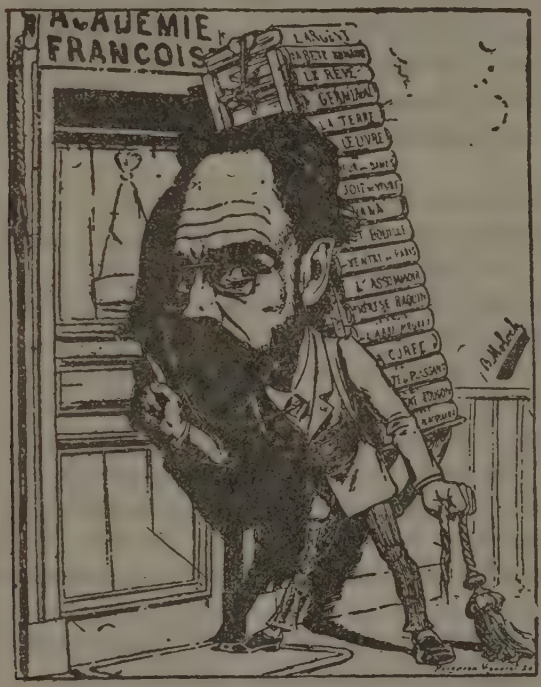
Out on the terrace the talk verges to the hostility of the younger literary generation toward the veteran novelists like Goncourt, Daudet and especially Zola. The Symbolist movement was in full flower.

"What do all these slatings matter?" Zola exclaimed. "What difference does it make to us? None at all!"

Referring to a ferocious article against the Naturalist school in the morning's paper, he declared that "it only made things more interesting . . . it gives the evening of the same day a certain savor when one can taste to the full some brutal onslaught of the morning"; with a certain excessiveness that was typical, he went on to defend his attackers, the decadents, the symbolists.

"Tell us about your visits to the Academicians, Zola!" someone asked, and the novelist, greatly regaled, gave a diverting picture of his pilgrimages to the Immortals in quest of a chair.

Some years before, Alphonse Daudet had presented himself hopefully. Scorned, he had written a withering satire called *Les Immortels*. Of Goncourt, there had been no question; he had secretly drawn up in his Testament, the elaborate plan of his



THE SEVEN CARDINAL SINS: ENVY

Emile Zola Before the Academy—Caricature by Moloch, in Silhouette, 1891.

own Academy! But for Zola, the revolted, the Voltairean spirit, author of *Nana* and *La Terre*, and after what he had written of them!—to offer his candidature. . . .

The Academy had long undergone the trivial influence of the aged Thiers and Guizot, who when fallen from political power, played politics under the cupola; now of Monseigneur Dupanloup,

thundering against the infidels, and now of Cardinal Perraud, resisting them (since 1882) more jesuitically.

And the profane Zola now visited each of the "Dukes" of the French Academy? Immense! His only friend was François Coppée.

The Academicians who had long deemed him a man of "rude and violent manners and devoid of elegance in his speech," thus inacceptable(!), now discovered "with satisfaction, that he was a distinguished conversationalist, of a seductive finesse." They were none the less resolved to reject him. And so Emile Zola became the Perpetual Candidate for membership in the French Academy and by his insistence on this particular campaign delighted his enemies as he compromised his own public character.

No campaign for the Academy was ever conducted with more noise, with less tact and political acumen. At the very time he was writing an audacious series of articles in the *Figaro*, called *Nouvelle Campagne*, a work scarcely calculated to soften the hearts of the "Dukes." It formed one of the most diverting episodes of a period that was not lacking in humoristic *faits divers*. These political combats of culture, these "apotheosized" elections, which are so exciting to the Parisian press and the salons knew the menace of Zola for a time. And when in one year he rose to the astonishing total of 14 votes, approaches were made in a rival salon to Anatole France. The Baron d'Haussonville told France that in order to combat Zola, "a very literary name was needed," and that they saw none but his, outside of that of Bourget. He replied worthily, "that they would find others if they looked hard, and that as for me, I did not wish to be designated as one who stood in the way of a man of talent. . . ."

Absurd, pathetic chapter, a veritable fantasy of Zola's ripened years, incomprehensible unless one can trace it to all the backstage maneuvers, to the sub-conscious strata of this mind.

In the beginning, he had been hopeful and tranquil. "Hugo, even had to present himself four times. Victor Hugo!" He stated his object like a virtuous bonhomme. "The French Academy . . .

consecrates the talent of a number of men, whose merits the public mind is in doubt of. It is the full enjoyment of life to know oneself famous, to anticipate posterity, to have today the pleasure and privilege of fame. But it is not only with this desire that I am anxious to enter; my chief reason is to obtain for the Naturalist school a consecration that it has never received. . . . Hugo in presenting himself also wished the official consecration of a literary school which was as much discussed, praised, blamed as ours. I shall offer myself again and again. They shall have every opportunity of admitting me."

The years passed, and Zola's annual "little notes" harvested more and more meager results.

Thirteen times he posed himself. He had become more stubborn than ever about this matter. In the midst of the Dreyfus Affair, from exile, he continued to be a candidate!

His want of diplomacy was widely commented on. He was too "proud."

In his daily commerce with his fellow-men, he tempered his pride with decency. But when he took his pen he became a smashing, careening Zola, arrogant, and full of himself. This was maladroit, at a time "when if he should not exactly have effaced himself, he should at least have used discretion in order to gain allies for himself. . . ."

He would say:

"I recall that one of my friends (Daudet) called me the 'Shark.' I puzzled long before deciding whether I was wounded or flattered. I saw the image clearly. A shark pursuing a ship and swallowing all that fell from it! . . . Well! It matters little! The Shark, after all, is flattering. I am content to remain The Shark, a shark who swallows his age. It is my right; it will be my glory. A great producer, a great creator, has no function if not to eat his century and recreate it, to give it life."

And as if the tone of this utterance were not crushingly arro-

gant enough he expressed himself on the occasion of the seventy-ninth charge of plagiarism, thus:

"I have spent more than thirty years of my life creating, and there are offspring to the extent of some 1,200, all issued from me, a whole world of characters. Have I not proved my virility? . . . Run along, little man. You may assert that I appropriate everywhere and assimilate everything. You will never make anybody believe that my swarm of children does not belong to me!"

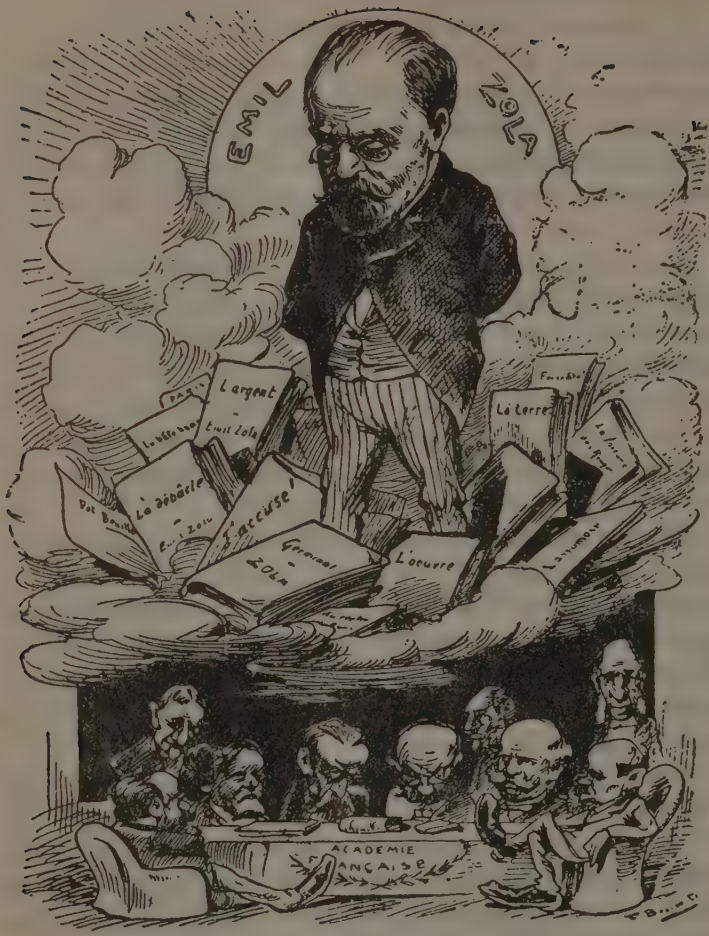
Zola was scarcely boasting. It was indisputable that he had a constructive genius, and the critics he scourged should have known better. "But," the observers of good taste would say, "are not these things one leaves to others the trouble of saying?" Or at least one tries to introduce a little spryness, humor, a more gracious irony in saying them. Despite the generous, courageous soul in him, Zola lacked *esprit* in such matters. And so the others could exaggerate his utterances, distort him.

"He is mad," they murmured. "He is delirious! It is the delirium of greatness. . . ."

And the "Dukes" of the Academy shrugged their shoulders, happy to see the execrated candidate consummate his own ruin. Zola, exasperated, redoubled his violence. He may have commented gaily upon his reverses in his own circle. But in reality he overflowed with bitterness.

"What arrogance!" exclaimed a lady before Mme. Charpentier one day.

"Arrogance?' she replied, "Is there anyone here," indicating her distinguished company, "who is not as arrogant? . . . But most of them have a secret vanity; they affect a modesty which is not of their soul, and assume a mild and expiring air under compliments. Zola is conscious of his value. He proclaims it out loud; his pride blooms in the sunlight like a sound fruit. And it is particularly this haughty candor, this lack of hypocrisy that they will not pardon in him!"



THE GIANT AND THE PYGMIES

To the Academicians: "So long as You Vegetate on Earth, You Are the Immortals; *but What Will Become of Your Renown, Afterward?"*

With habitual tenacity he persisted. "I shall insist to the bitter end. On the day of my death I shall present my name. . . . So long as there is an Academy I must be part of it. I am making literary history. My grand-children will know that Zola was refused twenty-five or thirty times by the French Academy. So much the worse! . . ."

And so each time a member died, after waiting through the usual month of mourning, he would present "his little note," stating that he was a candidate again. One wag even offered to print the note for future use. . . .

The Academicians frowned.

"The man is irritating. Why doesn't he let us alone? He has money, fame."

What, obscure, powerful impulses induced this refractory spirit, this rebel, this "bear," or "shark" as he liked to style himself, to undertake such a grotesque adventure, with such want of logic? One recalls his youth, "*a pariah*," whom people stared at mockingly in the street. One recalls him a novelist, whose books were, as he persisted in believing, long received n silence, or repulsed with cries of scandal. One recalls finally, he early refusals of the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor, he insurrection against him in his prime, and the accusations of maladies, manias, obsessions, pornography. . . . Now in the period of public honors toward which Mme. Charpentier had seduced him, as he boarded the last book of his stupendous cycle, as he tasted certain sensual triumphs and enjoyed fatherhood almost n despite of destiny, as finally one door after another opened before him, it is conceivable that his belief in his own powers became boundless and mystical. He *believed* that he would hammer open the doors of the Academy in spite of all opposition, as he had triumphantly beaten down all such opposition in the past.

"In this century, I am at the confluence of Balzac and Hugo!" he had cried.

Having virtually achieved his literary task, having in turn

"expressed" one baffled desire after another, in spite of everything, there had remained only this sentimental thirst for "glory," for "immortality," to satiate.

Cézanne commented long afterward that the secret feud between Goncourt and Zola played a part in this venture. In his will, Goncourt created and endowed a famous literary Academy, one of novelists primarily, which was intended to undermine greatly the official one that had long rejected his literary goods. When, in 1896, Zola made a funeral speech at the grave of Goncourt, he must have been aware at the moment of the cruelties that the dead man had written of him in his *Journal* (the first part published several years before). He was aware also that Goncourt had fomented the insurrection of 1887 against him, and that he had long ago been struck from the list of members of the "New Academy" of which it had originally been intended that he should have been the head. Their mutual hatred, their quarrel had by agreement remained secret. In literature they were comrades; it was no business of the public's. But none can ignore the rage that must have been Edmond de Goncourt's when he saw Zola's adhesion to the official Academy, and his formidable efforts to join it. . . .

Ignominiously checked in this ludicrous adventure, it is the common belief that it was in the passion of vengeance that Emile Zola threw his powerful frame into another and more desperate adventure. Would it not be more just to agree with one of his most informed haters that "glory was his cherished truffle," since he abandoned all safety, all peace, all shelter for its sake?

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With relief and trepidation, at once, Zola shut himself up in Médan to write *Docteur Pascal*, the twentieth and last volume of the "Natural and Social History of a Family."

Dr. Pascal was one of the "good" Rougons; at least the thirst for conquest in the family, had turned toward intellectual

domains with him. He was a doctor and a scientist, one might say that he was a brave "Naturalist" too, since he made profound researches into the "science" of heredity.

The scheme of years before, to use the person of Dr. Claude Bernard, author of the old "Introduction to Experimental Medicine," and to vision him struggling with a woman who fed upon his heart and destroyed one by one his works of genius, this scheme, into which he could always imagine, interestedly, his own experience, he had abandoned. Latterly, the more original theme had come to him, also interestedly, of the old doctor undergoing a kind of rejuvenescence through the love of a pure young girl, and becoming a father, before he died, to a child, "the unknown, last product of the Rougons, perhaps the future Messiah?" The final scene, as he had always imagined it, would be a young mother nursing her child and holding him up toward the sun! All the other threads of the *Rougon-Macquart* would be drawn in; all of the scoundrels would be despatched, as the decayed limbs fall from a dying trunk. And Dr. Pascal, aging, would utter the defense of the Zola doctrines, the apologetics for his whole literary production. Charles, the sickly degenerate child of a fifth generation would confront Tante Dide, mother of the whole brood, one hundred and four years old. . . . And that old knave of an "uncle Macquart" would die of spontaneous combustion, that is, a match lighted to his alcohol-inflamed carcass would finish him in a small "fine heap of cinders." Almost the legendary grease-spot! (Zola, ingenuously, took this fine case out of old medical tracts.)

A most curious novel indeed, *Docteur Pascal* (1893), contains far more exactly the spiritual account of Emile Zola than the equally autobiographical *L'Oeuvre*. The hero, a beautiful old man, whose whole life has been devoted, secludedly, to his science, to the invention of the revolutionary "serotherapy" (which would combat disease by serums, and prolong, revivify human life), is the guardian of his niece Clothilde, lovely, devout, whom he con-

stantly instructs and converts to his own pan-natural credo. He experiences thus an awakening, and an autumn love which flowers nobly and whose excesses are not removed from the suspicion of causing his abrupt death through a heart attack.

Zola had elaborately informed himself of the most recent discoveries of medical science up to 1892, through a Dr. de Fleury, who was a pupil of the famed Dr. Chéron, and who brought him news of the last inventions in hypodermic injections (Drs. Babès, Brown-Séquard, Chéron) even before they appeared in book form the following year. So that Dr. Pascal's most mystical prophesies about "dynamic therapy" were later justified.

He has attempted to study the very sources of life and its enemy disease by compiling his immense document on his own terrible and beautiful family, the Rougon-Macquart, over five generations. Zola is able to review in his words the whole teeming, pullulating horde which fills the previous nineteen volumes:

"Adélaïde Fouqué, the tall deranged girl giving birth to the legitimate branch of the Rougons: Pierre Rougon, and the two bastard branches, Ursule and Antoine Macquart. . . . The bloody and bourgeois tragedy of the coup d'état of 1851, the Rougons saving order for Plassans, while Silvère their nephew dies in the insurrection; the agitation of appetites unleashed; their son Eugène, the eagle of the family, the great man; and Aristide, the grafting parasite; the incestuous love between Aristide's son, Maxime and Renée, his step-mother; (Maxime, degenerate, enfeebled type, has even a bastard son, who is an imbecile, a beautiful pathological case). And then in the other branch, Octave Mouret revolutionizing big business and founding the colossal department store. The Abbé Serge Mouret, a provincial curé, who "sins" in the exotic garden of "le Paradou," and then shuts himself up forever in a monastery; Lisa Macquart, the fat proprietress of a meat shop in Les Halles; Gervaise Macquart the laundress of the Batignolles quarter; Etienne Macquart, leader of the great strike in the mining regions of the North; Nana

Coupeau, the demi-mondaine; Jean Macquart, in the war of 1870 and the Communes, and on, and on . . .

"Ah, it is a world, a whole society, a civilization, and all life is there with its good and evil manifestations, in the fire and forge that moulds everything. . . . Yes, our family may now suffice as an example for science, whose hope it is to fix mathematically the laws of nervous and blood variations in a race, as a result of an original organic lesion, thus determining, according to the social environment, the sentiments, desires, passions of its members, all the natural and instinctive manifestations whose products are called virtues and vices. . . . It is also a historical document, covering the second Empire from the coup d'état to Sédan; for our tribe, originating among the common people, invaded every station of contemporary society, carried away by the overflowing of appetites, this essentially modern impulsion, which throws the lower classes toward pleasures, and in march across the whole social body. Their origins I have told you: they emerged from Plassans, and here we are at Plassans again. . . ."

The genius of the huge family, Dr. Pascal, dies of cardiosclerosis before he can complete his great labors. It is a fine opportunity for Zola to become clinical, and he has Pascal himself relate each stage of his agonizing heart before a fellow-physician, in the interests of science!

The note of optimism consists not only of the birth of Pascal's posthumous child (mixture of the finest Rougon stock and a promising mother); it is in the note of the "eternally fecundating breath of life," the immense roots of those family-trees plunged in the soil, "the ceaselessly rolling sea of life" with which Zola closes the cycle of the Rougon-Macquart.

A copy of *Docteur Pascal,* still guarded by Jacques Emile Zola, bears the dedication:

"To my beloved Jeanne,—to my 'Clothilde,' who gave me the

royal harvest of her youth, and made me thirty years again, presenting me with my Denise and my Jacques, the dear children for whom I have written this book, so that they may know some day how much I adored their mother and with what respectful tenderness they must repay her for the happiness with which she consoled me in my sad hours.

EMILE ZOLA."

This glowing hymn to "love, which is stronger than death," to the eternal life-force, is this a logical outcome of the rigorous, cold investigation of the human species which Emile Zola began in 1868? Did not science, instead, still continue to inform us that we belonged among the lower animals, that we were less wise than certain insects, that we were subject to diseases which could perhaps never be checked, that our knowledge of the universe overthrew religions, while offering no consolations, save the ultimate extinction of life on the earth?

Zola had made a departure, and the close of Dr. Pascal announced his new path. He was an *interested* partisan of life, with a mission . . .

For a quarter of a century Emile Zola had towered like a big tree over the life of France. A whole generation had grown up with this vast book of twenty volumes and twelve-hundred characters. Millions had read in it. Its completion in June, 1893, appeared a colossal achievement, one of the most constructive of the century. He had labored, plowed his way, with an intense vision of the truth, with triumphant certitude. It was as if "the *Rougon-Macquart* had written him." Now that it was done, the whole nation applauded him; now that the Naturalists were as a triumphant army, the age prepared to move away from Zola, in other directions. . . .

During the '80's, period of *la littérature brutale* as J. J. Weiss termed it, the ascendancy of *Zolaïsme* is attested by the first

works of Jean Lorrain, of Lucien Descaves, of Abel Hermant, of Paul Adam, of the brothers Rosny, of Paul Margueritte, of Octave Mirbeau; in the drama by the plays of Henry Becque, by those of Hennique, Henri Lavedan, Georges Porto-Riches, Eugène Brieux, etc.

Positivism (i. e., mechanism, or materialism), of which the Naturalist authors were the more or less pure agents, involved political and social doctrines which had been making vast strides too. The encouragement of lay schools (1882), the new laws on divorce (1884), the suppression of "blank" senators (1885), the collapse of "the man on horseback," Boulanger (1887), were all events of the utmost favor to a literary school which styled itself scientific, realistic, republican. Already certain young statesmen (who are still in the political saddle) spoke of formidable innovations: the separation of Church and State—in which Emile Zola was to play a dramatic and crucial part—and the direct income tax. At this last the moderate or bourgeois element were thrown panickily toward a reconciliation with the party of the Catholic Church, and the extreme conservatives. Their efforts revealed themselves in literary and philosophical manifestations. They spoke with new fervor of the "ban on the spirit" for two generations, of "the bankruptcy of science," its failure to fulfill early promises. A campaign of mysticism against science was launched in the '90's, as Berthelot observed; Brunetière in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* was its most aggressive spokesman. Then there appeared the young Bergson (*Données Immédiates de la Conscience*), with his exposition of the qualitativeness and fluidity of reality. His theories gave great impulse to the school of Symbolists in literature, Mallarmé, de Gourmont, Samain, Henri de Régnier. . . . The conversion of Zola's friend, J. K. Huysmans to Catholicism (1893) was at length an event of world-wide triumph for the partisans of mystical religion, however compromised its real circumstances may have been. The appearance during this period of E. M. de Vogüé's, "The Russian

Novelists," was likewise a stategic move, since the author indicated that the work of these literary giants presented a frankly spiritual picture of life. Two successful novels, *Pêcheurs d'Islande*, by Pierre Loti and *Le Disciple* by Paul Bourget were also of strategic importance.

Bourget's book, was, in fact, a trial of the very Naturalism or materialism which dominated the time. His hero, through the experimental influence of Taine (of Zola, if you wish) is shown seducing and destroying a pure young girl for the purpose of scientific experimentation! . . . Overcome by remorse, he falls back into the arms of the Church. Written with sincerity and a certain power of logic (albeit somewhat equivocal) *Le Disciple* caused a great agitation.

In 1891, Jules Huret, a literary journalist, conducted for the *Echo de Paris* an inquest on Literary Evolution. He questioned all the great men as follows:

1. *Is Naturalism sick? Is it dead?*
2. *Can it be saved?*
3. *What will it be replaced with?*

The replies of the Naturalist authors themselves are most significant; they realized as instinctively as actresses do the changing appetite of the public. One of the intrinsic weaknesses of this cult was the exploitation of its more obvious processes by cheap and vulgar writers like Félician Champsaur.

There was a general abandonment, even by the faithful. Maupassant who had been writing psychological short stories, departed from the sane world at this time; Céard became skeptical; Daudet wanted to use literature in order to "sell happiness." Their replies were quite reserved and guarded. . . .

Paul Alexis, the most loyal of the *Zolaïstes*, and whose cultivated personal preferences for "Naturalistic experiences" gravely

troubled the chief of the school and his wife, was highly indignant at the very institution of such an inquest:

"*Naturalism not dead*," he telegraphed from the South.

The harvest of replies, published over a series of months, forms a document of curious interest, including a good deal of nonsense.

Rémy de Gourmont, identified with the new review, *Mercure de France*, pontificated:

"The trend of the new generation is rigorously anti-Naturalistic. It is not a matter of partisanship; we simply depart with disgust from a literature whose baseness makes us vomit. . . . Villiers de l'Isle-Adam is our Flaubert! Laforgue and Mallarmé are our masters. And Huysmans, having become conscious of his personal value and mission (after having outdone the Naturalists in their strictest formulae) has *fiché le camp* by his *À Rebours*, and thus liberated a whole new literature. . . ."

The opposition of this group was subtle and dangerous; they exorcised Monsieur Zola with a little incense, a little prayer, a little mediaeval Latin, and a great air of superiority. . . .

ZOLA

Naturalism finished? . . . Possibly. We have held a thick slice of the century; we have nothing to complain of; and we represent a splendid enough moment, in the evolution of ideas of the nineteenth century, for us not to fear facing posterity.

It surprises me that no one has made the proper criticism. You have abused the positive fact, the apparent reality of things, the visible document; in complicity with science you have promised happiness in concrete truth, in the negation of idealism, and you have deceived us. . . .

One might reply that impatience is justified, but that science moves slowly and perhaps we must offer her credit and wait for returns. . . . This reaction is logical, and during ten or fifteen years, it may triumph, if a man appears who resumes powerfully in himself the plaint of the age, the reaction against science. That is how Naturalism may die.

But what can never die is the quality of the human mind which

fatally thrusts it toward universal inquiry, in the need of seeking truth wherever it may be, and which Naturalism has embodied for a time.

Yet what are they going to offer to replace us with? As a foil to the immense positivist labors of fifty years, they display the vague label of "Symbolism" and some nondescript verse. They bring to a close this enormous century, formulate this universal anguish of doubt, this shaking of minds passionate for certainties, with the obscure babbling, the four sous' worth of verses of some café habitués!

The future is to those who seize the soul of modern society, and detaching themselves from too rigid theories consent to a more logical, more sympathetic acceptance of life. I believe in a picturing of truth, broader, more complex, a greater overture to humanity, a sort of *classicism of naturalism.*

(Zola is a little fatuous, a little naïve; he feels that his methods and his system must disappear with him. He is aware of the necessity of the moment, perhaps, for *mysticism*, faith. He is silent, reflecting, then says hastily, with but slight embarrassment):

Well, if I had the time, I would do the *other thing*, what they want, what they need. . . ."

HUYSMANS

We are done with Naturalism. In every direction . . . Masturbation has been novelized. Belgium has given us an epic of syphilis. I believe that in the realm of pure scientific observation we may as well stop there.

It was fated to come!

It is an *impasse*, a blocked tunnel, into which Zola with his great drum-beating has led us.

And yet what mighty loins that fellow has!

He is young, in reality . . . Did he not say that if he had the time he would set himself to searching for the *other thing?*

Well he is capable of it! . . . With one stroke of his athletic loins (*sic*) he can pierce the tunnel into which he has misled literature. It will be interesting . . . We shall see, we shall know later on.

ERNEST RENAN

Naturalism? Is there such a thing? . . . Ah, yes. I recall a friend speaking to me about *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret.* Two hundred pages devoted to the description of a garden . . . Extraordinary! You see I do not read much modern literature . . .

ANATOLE FRANCE

(For many years, France has felt himself blotted out by the gigantic shadow of Zola. He sympathizes with the social heresies of his rival, but is impelled by his antique enthusiasms toward a passive cynicism; his literature mocks humanity without risking itself in such constructive proposals as a Zola hardily and pathetically will offer at the end of his career.)

Naturalism is finished.

La Terre was not the work of an accurate realist, so much as of a perverted idealist. To see in peasants nothing but animals in rut, is as childish, as false as to make of a woman an ethereal, sexless creature.

Only women read books nowadays, and since in the salons it is impossible to mention *La Terre,* there is a rush for Bourget's psychological novels . . . They want something sensuous; for Naturalism is expiring both from *foulness and chastity!* Zola is never voluptuous enough when he paints human degradation. . . .

The two Goncourts, together, could have saved Naturalism and assured its life . . . in devoting themselves to higher society for their material. Reality is there as elsewhere: the passion of a society lady is as interesting as that of a laundress. . . . Jules died, and Edmond thought of it too late.

When Zola arrived at his greatest renown, the great salons were still closed, as the Republic began, and he had neither occasion nor desire to frequent society. Otherwise perhaps he might have changed the substance of his experiments. I say perhaps. . . .

(And finally, how graphic is A. France's jesuitism in literature! His own procedure for the next thirty years would prove how well and how factitiously he had learned the lesson: *Only women read books,* etc.)

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Nevertheless public honors rained upon Emile Zola on the occasion of *Docteur Pascal.* On June 28, 1893, a famous rustic luncheon was held at the Chalet Restaurant on one of the Grand Lac Islands in the Bois de Boulogne to commemorate the end of the *Rougon-Macquart* cycle. It was organized by the publisher, Charpentier, and the most distinguished men and women, the ambassadors and ambassadresses of beauty, wit, and fame were gathered. There were statesmen like Raymond Poincaré, poets

like Catulle Mendès, *artistes* like Sarah Bernhardt and Yvette Guilbert, generals, journalists. A brilliant, comical, chic luncheon, resplendent with champagne, with lovely females in the bustles and laces and flounces of the time, with toasts and speeches from the red ribboned and starched fronts of the Légionnaires.

Charpentier, Zola's publisher, first spoke, proposing the health of the hero of the day, and "alluding in very delicate terms" to Zola's early struggles. "The moment was an affecting one, and tears were seen to glisten in the eyes of Mme. Zola. . . ."

Catulle Mendès, himself a militant figure who had both rescued Zola and jousted fiercely with him over Victor Hugo, after recalling the early quarrels between the two camps, made a gracious speech of conciliation:

"I lift my glass, dear and illustrious master, to celebrate the day on which you completed your enormous work.

"Rejoice, dear and illustrious friend, for, still full of the force of genius for new realizations, you have already constructed a colossal monument which (after having stunned, then won the admiration of the men of our age), will remain the astonishment as well of the men of all ages. . . . While guarding my cult for Poesy, my fervor for the deathless, the supreme in art, I salute in you one of the most solid, most magnificent, most dazzling glories of modern France!"

Zola in rising to reply—how sweet was this elaborate public praise; his head swam and rang with it!—stammered and blushed like a schoolboy, as the diseuse, Yvette Guilbert relates. The words choked in his throat as emotion baffled the reason and routed all coördination in him. Let us pardon him his lack of the airier and sprightlier virtues! . . . He grasped the hand of Catulle Mendès and made a faltering acknowledgment, saying that "he had always considered Mendès a perfect artist and a good friend; and as to early quarrels, why should they be remembered now, seeing that we find ourselves hand in hand at the end of the road!"

A burst of generous applause covered the lacunae of his speech.

Zola insisted on making another later, to "Work. . . . For since one must drink to something, let me return to my old saw, which is that true happiness lies in work."

A General Jung who was present rose to toast Zola, saying: "You have done *La Débâcle*. Let us hope that you will do *La Victoire!*"

Zola jumping to his feet uttered the only *bon mot* he is credited with on this occasion: "That is for you to do, my dear general!"

Mme. Zola smiling and much the *grande dame*, the flaming dark eyes still young in her lined brown face, enjoyed too the sweetness of this hour. There was perhaps little more left for her than to pass before the world as the cherished confidante and companion of the great man. . . .

In recent days her character had indeed reverted greatly to the original one of volcanic passions and hysterical flights. She would brook no rival; there was no resignation in her nature. And her indignation at being reduced to a smaller and smaller rôle in measure with her husband's triumphs overflowed now in sleepless nights of struggle.

Few knew of the interior drama. The "other woman," the whole strange adventure in paternity had been shielded from the world. Many a time Alexandrine had cried out: "You will see! I shall leave you! I shall smash this fine fairy tale of the chaste and loyal Zola! . . ."

Little wonder that Zola at this epoch spoke often of his insomnia.

He would resume his complaints before his friends of illness, of internal pains, and his fear above all of angina of the heart. His nervousness was especially marked nowadays. When a storm came up at Médan, he would have all the doors and persiennes shut, the blinds drawn, and set the whole house ablaze with lights. He would remain paralyzed during the thunder and lightning, in

his vast billiard room, with a handkerchief bound around his eyes!

* * *

It was the time when Zola traveled more extensively than before. He who had been all for seclusion was now fêted everywhere.

In 1892, he had made a trip south to his "own country," and while near Marseilles had made the short trip over to Genoa, and been received by the Italian branch of the Zolas. Returning, he had resolved to pass through Lourdes where the prodigious Catholic revival centered itself under the whip of miracles of healing.

"I fell into Lourdes during a heavy rainstorm," he related before his colleagues at Charpentier's, "and had to stop at a hotel where all the good rooms were taken. In a temper, I was resolved to leave the next morning and not look at the place. . . . But I went out for a moment, and the sight of those invalids, those wrecks, those dying children brought before the image of the Virgin . . . the sight of these mobs flattened to earth in the prostration of prayer, this whole city of faith, born of the hallucination of a little girl of fourteen, the sight of this mystical city, of the Grotto, of the procession in the country, of the vast flocks of pilgrims from everywhere, held me. . . ."

"Yes!" cried Mme. Zola, "it had great color!"

"It had nothing to do with color!" Zola contradicted brutally. "There was a movement of souls which should be painted. . . . And so this spectacle gripped me so much, that, having left for Tarbès, I spent two nights writing my impressions of Lourdes."

He would make a book of it. . . . He had seen "suffering humanity, whom science had failed to console, seeking refuge in faith in the supernatural."

The following year, bearing the rosette of an Officer of the Legion of Honor, in the rôle of President of the Society of Men-

of-Letters, he had paid an official visit to England and been received by British journalists and literary men at Victoria Station and escorted through the City "much like a visiting potentate." Here too he had conquered severe Victorian opposition (through *La Débâcle*); when, but a few years before, his translators and publishers had been subjected to the most harrowing persecution during the crisis of militant prudery that convulsed England at this time.

There was a somewhat pompous ceremony, in which one of the hosts asserted that Zola had now "conquered the whole world;" and Zola's address, said in effect, "It is through hard work that I have conquered, if at all. . . . You see I am perhaps not as black as I am painted. . . . I have worked hard; I have been consistent with my beliefs. . . ."

He had also met the American novelist, Henry James, who had not seen him since the meeting at one of Flaubert's Sunday receptions nearly twenty years before.

"My impression of him was more informing than previously. He fairly bristled with the betrayal that nothing whatever had happened to him in life but to write *Les Rougon-Macquart*. (Is this not typical of James' subjective observation?) Something very fundamental was to happen to him in due course, shaking him to his very base; fate was not wholly to cheat him of an independent evolution. One strangely felt . . . a man with arrears of personal history to make up, a spirit for which life, or for which freedom, at any rate, had been too much postponed. . . ."

There was much curiosity as to what Zola was to do next, now that he had finished his cycle. His task was done; surely he merited a rest, the cultivated luxury of travel.

"I happened to ask him what opportunity to travel his immense application had ever left him, and whether in particular, he had ever been able to see Italy? 'All I've done, alas, was in the past year, in the course of a little journey to the south, to my own *pays*, to make a dash as far as Genoa.' It further befell that

I asked him what plans he had for the future, now that still *dans la force de l'âge,* he had so cleared the ground. I shall never forget the fine promptitude of his answer. 'Oh, I shall begin at once, a trilogy: The Three Cities.' And which are they to be? The reply was finer still. 'Lourdes, Paris, Rome.' "

James recalled that it left him "gasping." Zola was an honest man, he always "bristled with it" at every pore; "but no artistic reverse was inconceivable for an adventurer who, stating in one breath, that his knowledge of Italy consisted of a few days spent in Genoa, was ready to declare next that he planned on a scale, a picture of Rome. It showed how he had marched from subject to subject, how consummately he had 'got up' each in turn, reducing such getting-up to an artifice. . . . Was the adored Rome to be his on such terms? The Rome he was already giving away before possessing an inch of it? One thought of one's own frequentations, saturations. . . . Was he to find Rome through an introduction or two, and a Baedeker?"

Then there was to be no pause for the great literary adventurer. It was to be Lourdes, Rome, Paris.

But Zola himself was not so triumphantly certain of his path. Not as he had been when as a young man of twenty-eight he had planned a certain cycle of novels. Privately, he felt "those arrears of personal history" to be made up. He dreamed of other activities, of another kind of career, which had long seemed beyond his talents.

He had recently been offered a seat in the House of Deputies, but had refused it tactfully. And he related to his friends, the Charpentiers, how he felt the ambition to make public speeches and even made trial of his powers at times in the privacy of his study. Opening himself up, "he lamented that he lacked the faculty for speech, that he could not feel its sovereign inspiration, too disturbed as he was by fear of trivial factors."

"He revealed to us," Goncourt had said, "*the passionate desire to graft upon his talent, for the complete achievement of his career,*

the eloquence of a Lamartine, thus augmenting his literary fame with the glory of a statesman."

His wife had objected:

"But Emile, you should confine yourself to that for which you have talent."

"*Novels, novels!*" he had exclaimed to her angrily. "*Always novels!*"

CHAPTER XIV

ESTHETICS

"All art is one; spiritualist, realist are only words!"—Zola (at 20) to Cézanne.

THE theater was a realm of art which had long fascinated Emile Zola. The successive reverses he had met, however, served to cool his ardor for dramaturgy. And then, the conquest of the modern theater by his theories had been astonishingly complete, although too little recognized even now in the history of the modern drama.

Twenty years before the period that witnessed the triumphs of Henry Becque, of Brieux, of Donnay, of Bernstein, he had written:

"I am absolutely convinced that we shall soon see the Naturalist movement win the theater and bring to it the power of reality, the new life of modern art. . . ."

Two volumes of criticism, *Le Naturalisme au Théatre*, and *Nos Auteurs Dramatiques*, had been devoted to castigating the "conventional" stilted drama of Sardou and Scribe; and on the other hand to advocating the realism of his own prose fiction for the dramatic form. The realistic play would simply be an imitation of the novel; a series of tableaux, the intrigue of small importance, the action to be utterly simple and without "coincidences"; the action, in short, would be the progressive,

fated revelation of the intrinsic nature of the characters upon the stage. Costume and stage scenery were to help evoke the determining social environment, through their elaborateness and accuracy. . . .

There had been great resistance, despite the success of certain Zola novels in dramatized form. The critical fraternity twitted Zola publicly for having his novels dramatized by former vaudeville hacks. And when he had offered plays of his own completion, they had yawned, frowned, remonstrated; there was "too much belly"; the "powerful description" of the *Rougon-Macquart* was supplanted only by cheap stage-scenery, by mediocre acting. Nor did the early plays of Henry Becque (*Les Corbeaux*, 1882), exemplifying the same doctrines, if not the same shortcomings, fare better, before a public nourished upon Dumas-fils' "Lady of the Camelias."

It was in 1887, that a young man of rare histrionic gifts named Antoine, abandoning his clerkship at the gas company, formed a new theatrical group which he called "The Free Theater." He was an admirer of Zola and had adopted profitably the master's methods of arousing the public. One of his first resounding successes was *Jacques Damour*, a play created with great skill from one of Zola's stories by Léon Hennique. Antoine's memoirs now attest the admiration he felt for Zola, and his own anxiety to put the naturalistic theories into practice upon the stage. His theater, patronized by Zola and his confrères, permitted itself all the audacities, discovered young débutants whose names are now enshrined in box-office gold, Donnay, Bataille, Lavedan, Porto-Riche, Hervieu, Bernstein, Descaves. And through Zola's international relationships, for the first time, the plays of Henrik Ibsen were produced with extraordinary effect. Then those of Hauptmann, Strindberg, Tolstoy, Bjoernson. . . . With ferocity, with an instinctive technique, Antoine threw himself into his realistic rôles. In a number of years, the old-fashioned melodrama was swept from the boards. The success of the Naturalistic plays was devas-

tating, and ultimately through its own evolution arrived at atrophy. . . .

Zola witnessed this development, which he had long ago predicted, with gratification. He gave up, however, all ideas of adapting his own talents at this time to the theater.

* * *

It would be the part of wisdom, perhaps, to drop sounding lines now.

The novel, never hitherto accorded the prestige in literature of the lyric, or the poetic drama, or the essay, rarely crowned by the French Academy, was now, observes Brunetière, "by its unexpected and infinite combinations, by the variety of its forms, the freedom of its procedure, the universality of its language," in particular agreement "with our democratic society."

He speaks a little coldly, and has in mind the novel as it appeared in the hands of Flaubert and Zola, toward 1875.

The novel in such a form was eminently a "representative" art; it simulated recognizable persons and episodes, it avoided straining its subject through a process of idealization or formalization as the classical art of a Racine, or a Bossuet, had done. And at the same time, as a Zola directed it, the new novel abandoned the lifeless exaggerations of a Hugo. Seeking above all, verisimilitude, directness of language, and puissant, massive effect, it was destined to gain hordes of adepts, to reach a universal instead of an élite public, to become in the end, rather vulgar.

This situation, with its good and evil aspects, upon the surface at least, still prevails, and is characteristically modern.

"I am a man for whom, above all, the external world exists!" Théophile Gautier had said long before. He had forestalled Zola. It was with this spirit that the cycle of the *Rougon-Macquart* was imbued. Avoiding all that he deemed misleading and false in

spiritualism, Zola fastened his attention upon the tangible world; with his passion for *modernity*, he felt himself truly in accord with science when he presented his physiological pictures of man. He avoided all psychological commentary, or thought to, at least, by rendering only the *behavior*. His mood of relentless investigation led him to finger all the human sores, to present the human animal in all aspects with a lack of pudor or diffidence that is above all typical of him and his followers.

One of the results of such a direction was the prodigious trend toward the presentation of the sex instinct in its properly dominating rôle. Hence the furor, the militant opposition he aroused in his time, such as we can scarcely understand, we who have seen Zola far exceeded, and who have been solicited by the principles of psychoanalysis.

Attacked because he stripped man naked, Zola proceeded to write of the insides of man. There was undoubtedly an obsession, a neuropathic lack of balance which led him toward the clinical.

In its essence the *Rougon-Macquart* remains a pessimistic epic of human animality. As he himself thought of it, it was:

> "A fearfully agitated mass, what sweet and terrible adventures, what joys, what sufferings, all hurled pell-mell, in this colossal pile of facts! . . . There are social studies, commerce, prostitutions, crime, the soil, the farmers, the bourgeois, those who rot in the scum of the faubourgs; those who revolt; the whole growing urge toward Socialism which heralds a new century.
>
> "There are simple human studies, intimate pages, stories of love, the struggle of minds and of hearts against an unjust nature.
>
> "There is fantasy, the lifting of the imagination beyond the real, immense gardens flowering in all seasons, cathedrals. . . . There is all the good and the bad, the vulgar and the heavenly, tears, sobs, laughter, a whole ocean of life itself, bearing endless humanity.

It was truly an epic, although the twenty volumes are not integrally bound together, for the conception of a huge family, spilling into every level of social life forms but the loosest relationship. Nor need the novels be read in order, nor need all of them be

read. Ignoring even the half-dozen which were "written by rote," or with lesser convictions, (*Son Excellence Eugène Rougon, Page d'Amour, Bonheur des Dames, L'Oeuvre, Le Rêve, L'Argent*), the effect is still of an immense fresco, or perhaps better a series of vigorous and large mural panels dealing with a common period of history, a common Nemesis or Destiny.

Zola was aware of the brutal overtone, and the notes for his novels, in manuscript, reveal constantly the longing to derive some consolation from all this misery, idiocy, rage, bloodshed. Having written the terrible *Pot-Bouille* with its systematic ignominy, he counsels himself in his next novel, *Bonheur des Dames:* "To do the poem of modern activity. . . . Not to end in the note of stupid melancholy—rather the power and gaiety derived from habitual labor, of effort, of conquest. The joy of action and the pleasure of existence. . . ." And in the sketch for *L'Argent* (which follows "The Human Beast") he counsels himself in his elaborate manner "to describe life as it is, but *after all,* in its force, for its own sake."—"*To tell the truth and still to hope.*"

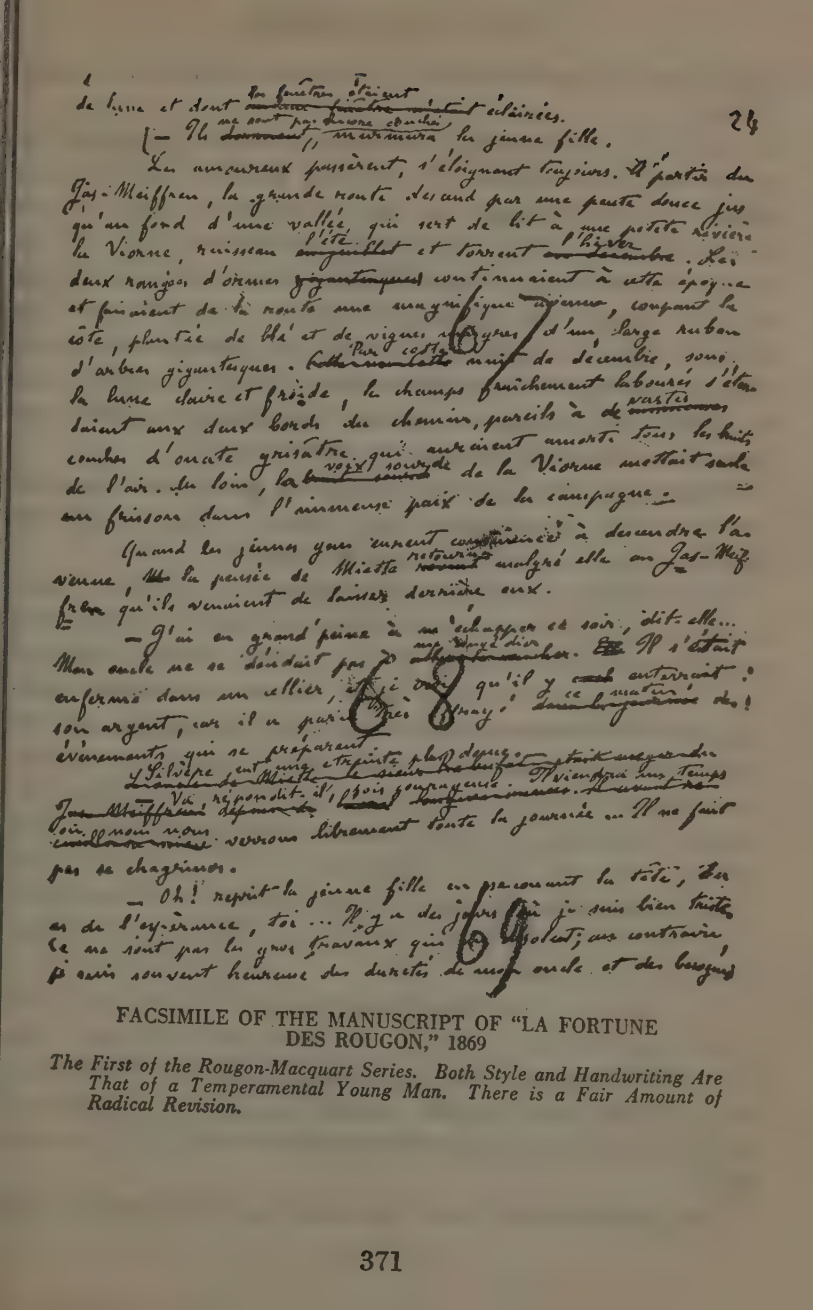
To tell the truth and still to hope—it is at this point that Zola's curious, complex nature is most nude to us, and most sympathetic.

Contemplating his own documents, and the parade of a score of novels, and finally his own retarded experiences, he arrives then at an overwhelming certitude: *the most magnificent spectacle in the whole desolate universe is the fertility and the continuity of the human species.*

It is no accident that this conviction should become of burning significance simultaneously with the birth of his first child so late in life. Henceforth, it was foregone that Zola should be the poet of human "fecundity" and of Utopianism.

1 1 1

There is a persistent legend that Zola wrote badly, that "he had no style." Like accusations were vigorously laid against Balzac, Stendhal, and even Victor Hugo's novels; the nineteenth



FACSIMILE OF THE MANUSCRIPT OF "LA FORTUNE DES ROUGON," 1869

The First of the Rougon-Macquart Series. Both Style and Handwriting Are That of a Temperamental Young Man. There is a Fair Amount of Radical Revision.

century would thus have virtually no great novelists, and much "style."

Zola's style, is in reality, very even, and over a long period of years remarkably objective. In the early novels, the manuscripts indicate laborious changes, frequent corrections in parts, flawless copy in others—indicating at times complete re-copying. In the first five novels of the *Rougon-Macquart*, there are even "purple patches"; despite his professed hatred of "romanticism," the touch is often very light, and the lyrical passages—above all because of his care to be accurate—have a particular poetry, even a lightness, that augured a notable new romancer, before the sensational terrors of *L'Assommoir* were evoked.

Somewhere, in this period, a Zola who would have been less extreme in his Naturalism, more gracious, a kind of superior Alphonse Daudet, a less verbose Balzac, was lost. . . .

From 1880 on, the manuscript appears even, steady, uncommonly devoid of important emendations or changes. (Zola wrote, too, with a great heavy quill.) He did not write swiftly, or hastily. Only four pages a day; and before that was undertaken there were the five to seven months of field-studies, of planning, and the daily afternoon promenades in the garden of Médan, ruminating. Zola's style, here, is still not heavy. But his sentences have the simplest forms, they are not intimate, or suave, or individually musical, to the ear. Neither are they jarring. They are neutral, as a style, extraordinarily neutral—save where the accumulated force and massiveness of the detail evokes those habitual effects of bold relief and power.

This quality of a neutral style, into which more and more frequently, breaches of syntax, commonplaces, disparities, even trivial shifts, appear, is due to a change in attitude; the fixation of the novelist's mind upon his general plan, upon the ensemble of brick upon brick, block upon block, which was to lead to his epic effects.

The distinguishing feature from now on is the process of tak-

bras nus, sa flancs nus, toute sa nudité divine, pour lui faire le don de sa royale jeunesse.

Ah! la jeunesse, il en avait une faim dévorante! Au déclin de sa vie, ce ~~petit~~ désir passionné de jeunesse était ~~comme une~~ révolte contre l'âge qui marchait, une envie désespérée de revenir en arrière, ~~[illegible]~~ d'être jeune encore, de recommencer. Et, dans ce besoin de recommencer, il n'y avait pas seulement, pour lui, le regret des premières bonheurs vécus, l'inestimable prix des ~~[illegible]~~ heures mortes, auxquelles le souvenir prête son charme; il y avait aussi la volonté bien arrêtée de jouir, cette fois, de sa santé et de sa force, de ne rien perdre de la joie d'aimer. Ah! la jeunesse, comme il y mordrait à pleines dents, comme il l'aurait recommencée avec l'appétit vorace de toute la manger et de toute la boire, avant que ses dents tombent, que ses membres faiblissent, que ses veines se glacent. Une émotion l'angoissait, lorsque il se revoyait ~~[illegible]~~ à vingt ans, la taille ~~[illegible]~~ svelte, courant et sautant avec souplesse, d'une vigueur bien portante de jeune chêne, les dents éclatantes, les cheveux noirs et ~~[illegible]~~ puissants. Comme il les aurait fêtés, ces dons dédaigneusement autrefois, si un prodige les lui a-

FACSIMILE OF THE MS. OF DOCTEUR PASCAL, 1893, NEARLY A QUARTER OF A CENTURY LATER

The Handwriting is Heavy, Bold and Deliberate; The Revisions—This is Typical—Are Almost Nil, and Average About 20 Per Cent of the Usual Rewriting in the First Novel.

ing things *en masse,* in great slabs and blocks, and piling them up, people, episodes, scenes, anecdotes, into vast tableaux. His concern for detail, in the steady impetuousness of the daily grind toward his total effect, lags; and this loose, excessively simple prose, with its "wide monotonous flow, steady and strong," seems admirably suited to the large effects he desired. (The gem-like, *intaglio* prose of a Marcel Schwob, of a Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, is confined, it will be recalled, to brief microscopic subjects.) The loose, steady beat of Zola's prose knows how to gain momentum, as he patiently projects his somber masses, as he brilliantly retains and accumulates an enormous quantity of exterior detail; it becomes a torrent, a triumphant tide. This epic quality, brimming in *L'Assommoir*, in *Germinal*, in *La Terre*, is an effect of the mass, rather than the perfection of the detail. It is a unique, an unequalled poetry in its own way.

One recalls inevitably the scene of the marching strikers in *Germinal.* It is the poem of a strike, in mass-movements, in heavy chords, such as have scarcely ever been sounded before. The effect, the rhythmic contagion, mounts, mounts. . . .

And again in his invocations to the colossal food-stores of Paris, or to some piece of modern sculpture, such as the locomotive in *La Bête Humaine,* or the pumps of the mines, "thick, heavy long-breathing . . ." he is an epic poet, aroused intensely by his subject. Methodical, but intense.

Another myth: that Zola was "realistic," viz. accurate, photographic; that he gave in short veritable "slices of real life."

As to the preoccupation with "reality," once such an idea is advanced as dogma, rather than as a piece of good, if enigmatic advice, or as a display of personal preference, one thinks only of revolting and proclaiming the eternal liberty of art to employ all forms which are effective esthetically to a given temperament.

Zola, in fact, did all in his power to give the public the wrong idea of where his talents lay. His campaign articles in the press, gathered in the seven critical volumes dating from 1865 to 1881,

his drum-beating for the "Experimental Novel," the exhortations to writers, to the youth of France, to "embrace reality closely," and "to be scientific," all the slogans of "Naturalism," which erected merely his *personal tastes*—and replete with contradictions too!—were merely turned against him joyfully by his adversaries.

And had not Zola himself, before the reproaches of Flaubert, confessed that his campaign doctrines were for the purpose of raising a standard "with which to baptize" the new era, for the public?

An excessively sane critic of his time, Jules Lemaître, finally unmasked Zola. The man was a kind of epic poet, a pessimistic poet, he maintained. He was no "naturalist"!

"A poet is a writer who by virtue of his idea, or vision of an idea, notably transforms reality, and thus makes it live again."

This is an excellent statement of what Zola, in his best moods, accomplished. It was the *exceptional,* above all, that caught his eye. He was "the brutal and sad poet of blind instincts, of carnal love, of repulsive humans." It was Alphonse Daudet who represented the Naturalist theories most efficiently. He takes always real and singular characters out of his intimate experience, places them in an action which defines them and which is the natural outcome of their character. Whereas Zola takes always a group which he knows only in the rough, and often represents to himself before examining it in detail; he imagines a simple and broad drama, where powerful masses conflict, and reveal only *general* types as emblematic. He "*invents* more than he observes, and is more truly a poet, even an *idealizing* poet."

He is the prey of his own obsessions, which only by the loosest methods can be termed "Naturalistic." His character rendition, in *Pot-Bouille*—his most "scandalous" novel—is effected only by coarsened signs; a red nose, a large bust, a big belly, signs repeated whenever the characters return. . . . "And yet they live, all energetically particular, because of the secret he possessed for

animating his groups, for putting his masses into motion, and finally for mingling the figures of the foreground with a large portion of humanity, and this humanity with the life of things, so that an ensemble impression of a torrent of life, groaning, bestial, deep, vast, prevails. . . ." I cite, here, Lemaître, the justice of whose criticism Zola privately avowed.

There is lastly the legend of Naturalism, emblem for a state of mind, an era of terror. In the hands of its lowliest votaries, it was synonym for lack of invention, for the bow to the vast public, drawn by pretended or real pornography; in the hands of its chief exponent, it signified, in his prime, the traditional procedures of great literary art. Reality . . . Exact Observation . . . are words. He himself was aware of how relative, how metaphysical reality is. His personal reality was then that of the transient, dogmatic nineteenth century, child of its scientific illusions. And his most gravely contradictory utterance was that "art is a corner of nature seen through a temperament." Reality; temperament —two mutually exterminating conceptions!

CHAPTER XV

VOYAGES

"Monsieur Zola seemed to caress the dream of founding a new religion."—Henri Lasserre.

HAVING reverently buried the last of the Rougons and placed a tree (genealogical) above their common tomb, Zola departed.

"He withdraws prudently from under its branches," stated one of the intimates of Médan.

And those of us who with him have fingered the fearful maladies suppurating in the core of this celebrated tree, may well applaud his wisdom.

The "last formalities" over, Zola took the train for Lourdes, at the foot of the Pyrenees, his trunk crammed with fresh note-books in order to set to work on his trilogy: "The Three Cities." Having "completed a stupendous cycle, having "so cleared the ground," as James said, and finding himself still in the prime of life, full of "fresh powers of realization," as the poet Mendès had said, he visioned himself again at work upon a "grand scale" to be sure, but within an orbit that took cognizance worthily of the briefness of our terrestrial span.

For Zola was a brave bourgeois, and had a philosophy. Bourgeois, because he had refused to join in the petition of this time in favor of liberating the anarchist, Jean Grave; because he

had said to that grand libertarian lady, Sévérine, who had come to compliment the author of *Germinal,* "But you are mistaken to make a revolutionary author out of me!" And indeed, he had a philosophy, albeit of an automatic kind, at this epoch; fixing his spectacles, and putting on his old jersey costume and slippers, he would abandon his official and unofficial wife, the relaxations of fatherhood, the bath of public honors, and *set to work.*

"And indeed it was a theory of his," he had written for Dr. Pascal, the most exemplary of the Rougons, "that complete repose was worthless. . . . Since man lived only by his external surroundings, the sensations he received translated themselves into movement, thoughts, acts; so that, in absolute repose, if one continued to receive such sensations without rendering them, digested and transformed, there resulted a congestion, a *malaise,* an inevitable loss of equilibrium. As far as he knew work was the best regulator of one's existence. Even on days when he was indisposed . . . he never felt better than when he had accomplished his task, methodically outlined in advance; and he likened this task to a balancing agent which held him erect, amid the diurnal miseries, frailties, errors."

It was this message which Zola brought before the youth of his time, in an address to the *Association Générale des Etudiants* (May 1893). He was, in truth, keenly aware of the intellectual *malaise* of the period, whose problems are still strangely to be identified with our own of thirty-five years later—does one establish no progress then?—and it was simply his own solution, as he had experienced it, that he brought to them.

"I have come to an age," he says, "when the regret of being no longer young begins, and one is concerned with the youthful generation rising behind. . . . I follow its movements, its ideas, passionately. What will become of our work in their hands, what will they reject of us, what will they guard?"

And thus on in a grave, forensic and prophetic tone, for which the novelist demonstrates ever greater aptitude.

"My own generation was compelled to throw open brutally the window upon nature, to see all, to say all . . . in accord with the long effort of positivistic philosophy, of analytical and experimental science. I have been much the sectarian, seeking to translate into letters the rigid methods of science. But who is there that does not exceed himself in the midst of a struggle, who restrains himself without compromising his victory. . . . [Zola often attributed his own excesses to the heat of battle in which he lived. The following generations would attain a more perfect balance, etc.].

"Enthusiasm and hope were ours. To know all, do all, conquer all! *To remake through truth a higher and happier humanity!* I regret nothing. . . .

"They tell me that you are breaking away from us, recognizing moral and social dangers in our tendencies, maintaining that science is incapable of re-peopling the heavens she 'has emptied.' You are undergoing a crisis, the lassitude and revulsion of the end-of-the-century, after so fevered a labor, and so colossal, whose ambition it had been to know all, to say all."

True, he observed, science was slow in bringing about the millenium. But had she promised ultimate happiness? He doubted it. Only truth. And for the sake of this alone he would champion science, against the returning waves of despair and mysticism. Men had expected science to reconstruct promptly the world which it had taken so many thousands, millions of years to create, and finding no justice, no happiness effected, they began to hope again in miracles.

"As science advanced, all that was ideal, recoiled. . . . The Eternal Power," they said, "seems more resolved than ever to keep its secrets, why it made us, where it leads us, who made it? Humanity begins to renounce the dream of penetrating this mystery."

Ah! to fall into a passive despair, to lean upon the supernatural, was impossible, at least for him. There was no returning.

There was no other course possible but to continue the slow, the courageous procedure of eating into the dark unknowable. To work, then! "A man who works is always good!" Let us have faith in work and science.

And then, from the farthest Eastern end of Europe, a deep and even more vatic voice arose to answer Zola. It was Count Leo Tolstoy, author of "Anna Karenina," "War and Peace," creator too of a vast literary corpus, who had now abandoned literature to live as a peasant and to reflect upon the true paths of humanity.

TOLSTOY

Work makes man evil and cruel, not *good* as Zola says. . . . To work in the name of science? But what agreement, what certitude is there in science? The scientists deny each other mutually. To work, then like the ant in the fable, without reason, without direction, is that our virtue, our glory? But all the great criminals are busy! The sellers of opium, of ammunition, of tobacco, are busily at work. We need peace, while Zola desires work and struggle. We must stop working, and find again our lost path. This can only be attained by non-action and reflection. For the only reality lies in the ideal.

[Tolstoy recalls to the western world the ideas of ancient Chinese Philosophers, such as Lao-Tsu-Che, the Taoist, who believed that Evil lies in what man does, and not in what he does not do! From this paradoxical conception, he developed his famous theory of "non-resistance," and "non-action," exhorting the Occident to observe the eternal wisdom of the Orient, as is being done today by our Orientalists of 1920-30, and to abandon all work save that for the production of food.]

We must love, in order to have happiness on earth, without distinction of family or race. And to do this, we must stop this feverish and vicious activity, and change our conception of life. Once rid of that which the Hindus call *Sansara,* the vanity of living, which clouds the true sense of existence, the word of Christ could reign again: "Love each other!"

ZOLA

Splendid! But all of us have our own hour of meditation, at various times, if not at a given, universal hour. How can we institute such non-action, such a universal strike as Tolstoy advocates? How does he envisage our direction, our future society? "To love each other . . ." is rather vague.

Humanity advances, groping, as always. Because we are groping now, must we abandon everything, cease advancing? The end and hope of man is truth, to work toward truth is the sole joy.

Culture and social organization are the product of a slow series of changes, which we call progress. Who knows whether man will love his neighbor in the future? The only thing we do know is that his nature cannot be changed in a day, as Tolstoy hopes. That is pure chimera.

When I see a man of such great talent spend his gifts in reveries, I cannot help thinking of that admirable letter which Turgenieff wrote him from his death-bed:

Dear Leiev Nicolaievitch,

*I have not written in a long time, because I have been and am on my death-bed. I cannot be healed, or even think of it. I write you to tell you only how happy I am to have been your contemporary, and to express my last, sincere prayer. My friend, return to art, since it is a gift which came to you whence all comes. Ah, how happy I would be if I could believe that my prayer would be heard! As for me, I am finished. . . No more to walk, no more to eat, to sleep. But I am tired of repeating all that. My friend, great writer of the Russian soil, hear my prayer! Let me know if you have received this note, and permit me to embrace you once more . . . warmly. I am tired! I can write no longer. . . .**

TOLSTOY

I know well, that it is impossible to stop all the wheels of society at once, and supplant them. What I should like is that we cease to consider as immutable the way in which we live and penetrate to its *immorality*. . . . I wish to abandon the arts, science, metaphysics as we know them today, because they deceive us. There exists not a single science or art which can procure for the greatest number of people the greatest sum of happiness possible. Our sciences bring comforts only to the privileged classes.

Obsessed only with futile and vain things, they have no time to reflect upon the means of ending the suffering, physical and moral, of great numbers. . . . Let us stop thinking and making others think that Europe is more civilized than other continents, that our nation is the most enlightened; that there is nothing beyond our little circles and schools in which we glitter for ourselves. That is what I mean by *stop and reflect!*

We are in the position of a traveler, overtaken by a blizzard. He no longer sees the road, and knows himself lost. What then, if not to pause,

* This letter scrawled in pencil, unsigned, undated, was found among Turgenieff's last papers.

reflect, and look for the road again. He who advises us to go straight ahead, is like one who knowing us morally strayed, cries: March on, all the same!

ZOLA

Tolstoy takes his point of departure from the principle that man is good, love is latent in him. It comes from Rousseau, and as Taine showed, led to the Revolutions and the two Empires.

The nature of man has made society what it is. Science has not fulfilled its promise; but how could we obtain better results otherwise, since man himself would create science again. I wish to believe that our progress is toward the good. We cannot go back on our steps. It is a biological law. Life is not a matter of our will.

Tolstoy puts on trial not only a people, but all humanity in general from the beginnings. Granting this possible, I ask, can man stop, acknowledge his error and start on a new path, save to get lost again, since it has always been his nature (according to Tolstoy) to do this up to now?

It was in this key of doubt and grim resolution, that Zola had bought his ticket for Lourdes, where for many years, a theater of miracles, of revivals, a veritable Mecca of Christian mysticism had impassioned all Europe, and revealed how much "humanity consoled its lost illusions with renewed faith in the supernatural."

Did Zola go down with an open mind, ready to believe, himself (if he were only shown) in the portent of these miracles of "healing by faith"? Or did he, sinister, set out to smash this fair legend?

One of his first acts upon arriving at the miraculous Grotto was to despatch a bottle of the famed spring water to Paul Alexis, whose sight had been growing so myopic that he could scarcely see his thumb before him. Doctors had brought him no relief.

"*Sending you today bottle water drawn by me from grotto of Massabielle—Zola*" came the despatch. The next mail, as Deffoux * relates, brought the promised flask, "as carefully packed as a sample of old Burgundy."

"Alexis did not hesitate. He had no faith at all in Lourdes; but his belief in Emile Zola was so keen, that he bathed his eyes

* Rather, Léon Deffoux et Emile Zavie—*Le Groupe de Médan.*

every day in the precious liquid. And one of the fairest miracles of literature took place: the sight of Paul Alexis improved materially." For we are far from having measured the force of faith, and Alexis was the true disciple, the "fanatic," the shadow of Emile Zola . . . one who walked always a respectful distance behind, never before him.

The new ventures of Huysmans, devoting himself to the most diverse manifestations of the *supernatural*, had been followed with undisguised interest by Zola. So that there seems less of hazard in his trip to Lourdes and his determination to present what he has seen of "suffering humanity seeking refuge in faith. . . ."

His visit to the celebrated shrine aroused great hopes throughout the Catholic world. If the conversion of Huysmans but recently had been of world-wide note, that of Zola—could one dream it—would be a cataclysm!

He was graciously welcomed by the officials of Lourdes, and since he assured them, in his most *bonhomme* manner that he came only to learn "the truth," that he wished only to be convinced and to share their faith, he was escorted about the city of miracles, to which the revelations of a poor peasant girl, Bernadette, had brought the whole world of the sick and the believing, by Henri Lasserre, its historian. He saw the famed Grotto, the processions of tens of thousands of pilgrims, the hospitals where "miracles" were certified, the "white trains" which bore the sick to Lourdes and away.

"His eyes were haggard, and two tears stood in them," as he viewed the hovel in which Bernadette was reared, we are told by Lasserre. This basilica, this marble city rising in the desert near the Pyrenees out of the vision of a peasant maid! "Stupendous!" Zola had exclaimed.

"Miraculous, rather, Monsieur Zola," said the historian.

"Stupendous!" Zola insisted.

"Bernadette was undoubtedly the instrument of the Great Beyond," he is alleged to have exclaimed, "Not a hallucinant, she did

not lie. Without being a believer, I see Lourdes as far from what I supposed: a place of consolation, of hope and healing for the multitude of wounded, incurably sick . . . an oasis! To attack it would be a crime of *lèse-humanité.*

"*You will find many things in my book,*" he concluded, "*that will give you pleasure.*"

There was a memorable outcry of indignation and disappointment when *Lourdes* appeared in 1894. The Church maintained loudly that Monsieur Zola had practiced deception. It is clear at any rate that he had not prevented them from hoping whatever they wished to hope. The book was immediately placed on the Index, a fact which did not impede its sales from exceeding 200,000 in French, since the sublimated reporter had touched again one of the "burning questions" of the day.*

It is difficult to believe that Zola in his "loyal quest of truth" came with aught but the need for the observation-mechanism which stimulated his thought. It was an imperative need with him to be on the "front," on the very battle scene of his future novel. For the rest, the plan of the new trilogy had been roughly outlined, some time before, as is to be seen from his prompt statement to Henry James: "Lourdes-Rome-Paris."

If the Abbé Froment, principal character of Lourdes, had had in him the possibility of faith, there would have been little object in the two following novels which *had* been projected in advance.

He is instead a person who glorified reason above faith; he has never ceased inwardly to regret his vows. The "miracles" of faith-healing which he witnesses at Lourdes, in the fever of crowd madness and the dynamic passion of belief and will, do not convert his doubting soul.

Lourdes is prodigiously "documented" with innumerable forms of degeneration and disease, with visions of great crowds in pro-

* All the works of Zola are on the Index. "Zola was an enemy of the Church," said Pope Leo XIII, "but he was a frank and straightforward enemy. May his soul repose in heaven!"

cession, with side-glimpses of the monstrous and the vicious, much like one of the *Rougon-Macquart*. But its difference, its departure from the old method, lies in the long controversial passages, in which the Abbé Froment, an intellectual, and socially conscious, communes with himself or his intimates. Zola makes a sincere effort to understand the passion for the miracle, and through this, religion. But his conclusion is that modern society needs a new religion, one absolutely unlike the spectacle of Lourdes. It is absolutely fated, it is in the very fiber of this man that he should reject the whole religious order.

Zola professed great vexation and disappointment at the hostility of the Church toward his book.

One might say that he assumed an air of great *ingenuousness* at this time; for with the most naïve candor and hope he announced to the press in the autumn of 1894 that he was traveling to Rome to seek an audience with the Pope, for his next novel, *Rome!*

The voyagings of Zola had for some time become one of the phenomena of contemporary European life, widely advertised in the press, and interrupted by formal receptions in the towns which his itineraries traversed.

A cartoon by Steinlen in the *Gil Blas*, Paris, April 22, 1894, pictured Zola as no doubt he loved to picture himself.

He is standing on an elevation, wearing a great checked tourist's cloak, much like an old-fashioned reporter's, and while he peers through his spectacles at the immense defile of the national pilgrimage, he writes observations in a large notebook. A sea of anguished faces and figures passes in parade before this commanding warrior of Truth whose arms are the lorgnon, the pen, the notebook. . . .

In going to Rome to call on the Pope, officially, he told Goncourt, he was truly a little hesitant. "As an old libertarian, the ceremony bothered him. At heart he wished to be denied an audi-

ence, but found himself committed by the announcements he had made."

The travels of Emile Zola at this epoch were likened to those of Voltaire a hundred years earlier, who also had been grandly received in England as the representative of French literature, and by European kings and potentates. In Rome the Zolas were received by the King and Queen of Italy, Madame Zola enveloping herself with tragic stateliness in the reflected glory of her husband and making a particular impression upon the Court.

"The Pope has no reason not to receive me," Zola had declared publicly. "And then I cannot, of necessity, dispense with his audience."

The clerical academicians in Paris foamed at his ingenuous audacities.

No sooner landed in Rome than the novelist was enmeshed in the impenetrable net of political intrigue that hung over the Vatican and the Quirinal at a moment of strain. He was virtually rushed off his feet by prelates of the Holy Church, politicians and journalists.

Zola's first words in disembarking at Rome, says Ugo Ojetti, a Roman journalist, were: "Introduce me to the dark world . . . the Jesuits, the Jesuits!"

And so Ojetti pretends that "he kept careful watch over Zola's society, and composed for him with verve an Eternal City of the sheerest fancy. . . . He wanted all sorts of crimes and vices. I mixed a marvelous dish of venoms, poisoned mushrooms and other sundries, which any reader would lick up with his fingers."

Ojetti, and certain other Romans, it appears, were great practical jokers. "The ferocious novice saw already a masked Jesuit serving a princess the poison of the Borgias, while a prince with flaming eyes laughed behind a piece of tapestry worth one hundred thousand francs," comments Léon Daudet.

The approaches toward the Pope had an amusing history.

An ecclesiastic, seeing Mme. Zola received by the Queen, pro

posed to Zola that he have the Quirinal intercede for him before the Pope.

This was done. Whereupon another prelate exclaimed:

"But you have spoiled everything! What an idea it was to ask the Quirinal to intervene! Do you not know of the strain between the King and the Pope? There is nothing to be done now!"

Zola was interviewed constantly, himself.

"I have nothing fixed in mind, as yet," he said. "Rome is a *rather dry subject.*"

Rome *dry?* The Eternal City a dull subject! Catholics and classicists throughout Europe were apoplectic.

Zola meant no doubt that gathering documents on Rome was becoming a little dry, a little classical.

He persisted, however, as he always did, and announced after some animated weeks:

"With patience, a little dexterity, a few tips, one can always inform oneself, everywhere. I know well how the Pope lives, how he wakes up, how he goes to sleep, all without having seen him. At any rate, *I have my Pope,* and my book will not suffer for the refused audience."

The tale went around now that the irrepressible Zola had bribed the Vatican servants in order to learn about the insides of the Holy See; it excited great indignation and was duly denied in turn.

After "five ferocious" weeks in Rome, and having made "a vast inquest," Zola returned to Paris with his files and proceeded on his plans of *Rome.* He worked more slowly through the following year; he was not finished with it until early in 1896, when the book appears.

The search for the new religion is the theme of *Rome.* The Abbé Pierre Froment, who has been repelled and discouraged by the spectacle of animal faith at Lourdes, dreams of a purified Christianity, writes a book on "Catholic socialism" and leaves for Rome to try to make the Pope accept this new interpretation of

religion. The form of the book is simple, with its fresco of Roman society and clerical organization thrown against the intellectual drama of Pierre Froment. The onerous documentation, which burdens *Rome* hopelessly, the ill-sustained length, are an indication of a weakening grasp of this heavy pen.

The central idea is clearly given, that the Church, bound to its past, become a heavy administrative machine, cannot be bothered with saving the world; she can solve no social problems; the Church, in short, must be abandoned, the world must be saved again through love.

The Pope has of course refused to see the radical Abbé (!) and Froment abandons his gown, and marries, to be saved himself by love and children.

In the third of the "Three Cities," *Paris* is posed against the Eternal City as the City of Light, the intellectual center of the world. It is the city in which he was born that Zola makes the hero of his book; less laden with "naturalistic documents," more charged with personal inspiration and reminiscences, it is probably the strongest volume of the cycle.

The two human threads in this picture of the metropolis are the story of the Froments and that of the Baron Duvillard. The latter with his licentious wife, his degenerate son and daughter, his stupendous wealth and entourage of newspapers, politicians and go-betweens, is symbol of the decay of modern society. Pierre Froment moors himself in the submerged class. It is his brother who is a great chemist, and who invents the marvelous explosive with which the old world may be blown to kingdom come. The period is the time of the anarchist outrages in Paris. Fortunately Pierre seizes the explosives, just as the cathedral of the *Sacré Coeur* atop the Montmartre is to be blown up with ten thousand pilgrims; and his brother diverts his invention toward the perfection of a new motor which is to provide the millions with labor and food.

In *Paris* it is a far cry from the "slice-of-life" of the '70s and

'80s. The characters all have great foreheads, "like a tower" and are indefatigable talkers. All of the social panaceas, Fourierism, anarchism, socialism are paraded before the reader. It is no longer a question of presenting you cold-bloodedly with an exposition of life as it is: it is above all a matter of persuading through a kind of infectious, enthusiastic pleading. Documents, the pretense of telling a plausible tale, of presenting a veritable *milieu* of real characters, all these implements of the creator of *L'Assommoir* and *La Terre* have been subjected to the quest of certitudes. Above all there is the spectacle, in vague outlines, of the vast working classes in stupefying misery and the indifference of the ruling class. The solution is plainly, as it appears out of the confusion of theories, some form of collective program whereby all humanity will labor for the good of all humanity. As to the pointless Church—"The Old Testament dream of the Evangel is to be swept away by clear Latin rationalism, aided by modern science."

The certitudes that Pierre Froment finds are work, love, and faith in the force of life and its future (work, fecundation, justice) rigorously following the solutions which Zola himself had arrived at in his later years.

The procedure of the novelist has now completely changed. "He sees less than he dreams." And the mordant pessimism of earlier years has melted before this new faith in life, this belief in the essential goodness of all that was of nature. Had he not practiced "work and fecundity?" Had he not "made a book, planted a tree, had a child?" He was an idealist, and he placed himself squarely at the head of the movement of progress. He had now absolute and romantic notions of what were justice and progress, and his last books were reserved for the formulation of his theories.

He was to be more victim now to his illusions, his absolute romantic notions of what these things were. But he was conscious now more than ever of his principal rôle in the New University. As his purely literary associations dropped, the people saluted

in him now a leader bent on creating "a better organization in which men would live in a close and perfect solidarity." It was strangely as if he himself had made ready the arms of destiny. . . .

The abandonment of the Naturalist doctrines, then, is rendered complete by the apostasy of the chief of the school. He who had inveighed so against the romantic urge, who had steeled himself to the painting of livid cross-cuts of life "without moralizing," could not now take up the pen without preaching.

An event of an extraordinary character, which indicates Zola's extravagant faith in science, an outmoded Naturalist manifestation applied to himself, was the publication of Dr. Toulouse's "Psycho-Physiological Study of Emile Zola, with Reference to the Relationship between Abnormality and Genius." The novelist submitted himself to a thorough examination by fifteen celebrated medical and psychiatrical specialists such as Bertillon, Lombroso, Toulouse, Joffry, Bloch, Huchard. The whole record of his diseases, his antecedents, heredity, his hallucinations, his preferences, from his suppressed or fulfilled desires to the number of times he urinated, were made public with his consent, as a document of "truth," "since he had never hidden anything," and deemed the report of value to science. It is a very strange work indeed, including a great deal of nonsense besides much of profound suggestion, which one may cull. The interest in the question of genius and insanity was fashionable at this time; and the work investigated Zola's well-known "nervousness," while at the same time revealing his curious taste for "modernity" in authorizing such an inquest of himself.

This pre-freudian analysis errs too much in its leaning upon the significance of ethnological and cranial measurements and tests. Yet there is a treasure of data, from which we select:

". . . The sexual instinct in him was always characterized by a certain timidity, due to inhibitory ideas, and typical of neuropathic persons.

"A life of material privations in connection with intense intellectual activity encouraged his disposition toward a congenital neurotic condition.

"Sensitiveness of skin very great . . . sensitiveness to heat and cold very great . . . extremely sensitive to pain.

"Sleep does not rest him . . . exaggerated emotivity, which under influence of even slight excitation may cause painful reaction.

"Attention . . . intense, for three hours, oblivious to surroundings; does not recognize acquaintances, does not hear bells, dogs, etc. Faculty of observation extraordinary, specialized.

"In speaking, emotion inhibits or paralyzes him. . .

"Knowledge extensive, but not profound.

"Suffers from *false* angina pectoris (heart trouble), feels pricking of fingers for hours after an excitation, vertigo.

"Ear for music poor. Memory for smells extraordinary. Nature of his mental images is auditory."

HIS IDEAS

"Genius is *creation of being*, power and fecundity, not rarity or perfection of detail.

"He believes in complete annihilation after death. There is no God. That which is healthful is not injurious; that which is outside of nature is incomprehensible.

"He loves young women, freshness, health, physical and moral harmony, tenderness and charm. He has no fetiches. When jealous he withdraws into himself.

"*Certain morbid ideas* haunt him, since the age of thirty; but they do not cause him pain when unsatisfied; *he lets them run their course* in his mind, and so is able to resist them easily. Doubt in himself is one; fear of not being able to continue his daily task, to finish his book is another. He never rereads his novels.

"Although he has many nervous disturbances," concludes Dr. Toulouse, "the term degeneracy (used by Max Nordau) does not apply to him. He is neither epileptic nor hysterical—there is no sign of mental alienation. He has physical debilities, emotive disturbances and obsessions, yet his strong physique gives him immunity. *It is uncommon to see so obsessed and impulsive a person who is so well-balanced.*

"Yet he is a neuropath, a man whose nervous system is painful. Heredity caused this disposition and constant intellectual labor affected the health of his nerves. It is a question whether this neuropathic condition is not an excitation which has given rise to intellectual ability in Zola. (Zola's faculties in general had been rated ordinary in many respects.) A more or less diseased nervous system is not a *necessary* cause of talent or genius; but it has largely been concomitant."

Zola's appearance at the age of fifty-six was described.

"Of slightly below medium stature, about 5 feet, 6 inches; robust and solid; high square shoulders; white skin; voluminous muscles; moderate embonpoint; hair and beard had been brown, were graying now; he was very hairy, especially the anterior part of the thorax; his head and face were large; his face was plain and wrinkled deeply; his brow was handsome and unusually high: his eyes, his scrutiny suggested seriousness and reflection, although mild and even a little vague through near-sightedness."

"He had the body of an athlete and the head of a thinker."

It is amusing as well to gather the reflections from a form of "parlor-confession" in which Zola participated at this time:

What color do you prefer? Red.
What flower? The rose.
Which animals? All.
Which is your favorite occupation? My work.
What is your dream of happiness? To do nothing!
Which quality do you prefer in men? Kindness.
And in women? Tenderness.
Who is your favorite author, painter? Those who express things most clearly.
Your heroes in fiction? Those who were not heroic.
What do you deem the greatest misfortune? To remain in doubt.
Which historical characters do you despise most? Traitors.
Which personal gift would you wish most? Eloquence.
How you would prefer to die? Suddenly.

Immensely rich at this time, since, although he devoted nearly two years to each book, his earnings in all approached those of a multi-millionaire (about 200,000 gold francs annually); with a vast body of literature and successful struggle behind him; his glory attested in unparalleled pilgrimages by foreign luminaries from all lands, by fabulous offers which he spurned, by applause on all hands; it was Zola's nature to be nevertheless sad in mien, wearing always that worried, chagrined frown which was his life-mask.

His private life, for one thing, was at times scarcely to be

envied. Under the stress of jealous passion at the ascendancy of the "other woman" in the master's life, Alexandrine reverted from her character of a worthy and devoted spouse, to her original character, the strange woman of towering passions and great black eyes, of which "one must beware," as Huysmans had said. In continued spasms of hysteria she would in turn threaten to effect a public separation, to arm herself and shoot him and his mistress, or to kill herself! Their home life had been disintegrating for years, despite the powerful pressure of close friends. Zola longed only for peace, and was abominably unnerved by the scenes of commonplace and domestic melodrama through which his wife led him. But there was no peace with her. In the midst of one of her more terrible uprisings, she flung herself upon Henry Céard, who, tight-mouthed, had witnessed the long drama, and compelled him in spite of his reasoning, his attempts toward conciliation, to accompany her to a lawyer in order to effect a legal separation.

This secret episode, long guarded, must have taken place in about 1895-1896.

Zola, in great distress and anger, exclaimed: "Why does Céard mix in all this?"

And so Céard, the intimate companion of more than twenty years, who had run errands for Zola, who had gathered many a document for him, Céard, the cool, the devoted, the imperturbable gentleman with the monocle, departed from him, never to return.

Only Paul Alexis, almost prematurely childish, was left of the old band; since Zola had but recently made a speech at the funeral of Edmond de Goncourt, and Alphonse Daudet lay on his death-bed.

It was true that he passed many happy days and hours in the company of Mme. Rozerot, and above all, extravagantly in the entertainment and education of his two children, the elder of whom, the girl Denise, was uncommonly beautiful.

Yet the master looking into the future saw the glass darkly. He was wont to turn his power of scientific observation upon him-

self. He had said long ago, when only in his forties, to an older colleague:

"But how can we writers of the nineteenth century survive, with the colossal mass of our works? The ancients bequeathed us one or two masterpieces which posterity could cherish: An *Iliad*, a *Divine Comedy*, a *Don Quixote?* But we, with our twenty to fifty volumes, how can posterity select, how can it know which to keep? They will not even approach our works!"

And in August, 1897, having completed his "Three Cities," he could write to Henry Bérenger:

"I do not expect justice; I know that I must disappear."

To disappear! To be silent and unheard! The thought must have been uncanny and terrifying, as the vivid premonition of death itself to the morbid imagination.

It was not as though he meant to cease working. That he was incapable of! And the scheme of a new series, the Four Evangelical Novels: *Fécondité-Travail-Vérite-Justice* was in his hands during this pause in 1897, when he looked about him at his time, and toward the future.

"Novels. Novels. Nothing but novels," he had complained.

All his life had been a struggle—but with an "invisible enemy," as a man of letters striking out in *Germinal*, in *La Débâcle*, in *Lourdes*. In such novels, he had struck resonant blows at Capital, at the Army, at the Church. Now one could say, with the recently expired Goncourt, that he "longed to graft upon his literary fame" the glory of a man of action.

Or in a more *post-factum* manner, could one say now, with other wise commentators, that he *flaired* the "powerful public shock, old man," which would comprise his opportunity to place Hugo, Lamartine, Voltaire, all in one?

CRUSADE

BOOK FOUR

"Ah! to live indignant, to live enraged . . . at false honor, at universal mediocrity! To be unable to read a newspaper without paling in anger! To feel the continual and irresistible need of crying aloud what one thinks, above all when one is alone in thinking it, and to be ready to abandon all the sweets of life for it!"

CHAPTER XVI

THE DREYFUS AFFAIR

"Shakespearean tragedy orchestrated by Offenbach."—Sévérine.
"The Machiavellis of the Folies-Bergères."—Georges Clemenceau.

And now history was moving swiftly to make Emile Zola one of "the men of destiny."

Destiny? One may see it in its broadest meaning. The path of lightning has such or such an orbit: an immense force in the eternal human struggle calls Alfred Dreyfus, then in turn Scheurer-Kestner, then Emile Zola, then Jaurès, the Clemenceaus, the Picquarts, the Esterhazys.

One resents the tendency, in the case of a man essentially sound, to impute an action entirely to his purest or his most coarsely interested motives. Such conclusions are surely subjective and come from within our own limitations. A signal action is the product, totally, of a man's whole human structure. And when such an action becomes more far-flung than one had dreamed, precipitates civil war, shakes the pillars of the world, and brings one to the edge of the abyss, may we not, then, leave to the lesser men, the insinuation of lesser motives?

But we shall see. . . .

In the sixteenth century Luther unchained the Reformation: religious dissent, religious war; a cleavage of civilization. Among the convulsions which followed, there was in France, St. Bartholomew's Eve with its prodigious massacre of Protestants in 1572, preceded only ten years before by the "Capitouls" of Toulouse in the Midi, extraordinary and incarnadined festival at which some three thousand Protestants were slaughtered.

The religious wars form long dark chapters. But pursue only the history of the devout and ancient city of Toulouse, and you see that two centuries later (1762), the very centennial of "the capitouls" piously observed all the while, marked the arrest of Jean Calas, Huguenot, accused of having murdered his oldest son, who was reported to have turned Catholic. A short time later and Jean Calas was broken on the wheel, a process which lasted two hours, while he discoursed bravely with the chaplain and both persisted in his heresy and denied his guilt.

But on the French border of Switzerland, there was living a keen old gentleman who called himself Voltaire. His bizarre, clamorous public career had embraced the whole eighteenth century, all the courts and capitals of Europe. The mocking, skeptical notes of his laughter had been the mortification of all the forces of superstition, conformity, injustice. A Frenchman, it was safer for him to stay then in Switzerland.

When the question of executing all the family of Calas arose, it was too much! All Europe remembered the cry that went up from Voltaire. In his long and impassioned defense of the memory of the innocent Jean Calas, the courts, the great and the low, soon joined him. Madame Pompadour wept and added her considerable mite. The bigoted city was stayed: the Calases were saved. Voltaire's "Defense of Jean Calas," remains one of the great documents of our civilization. . . . Tranquil, skeptic egoist, living out his days in his villa at Berne, he had yet been unable to endure remaining indifferent, once he had heard of the Calas affair. The power and the fugue of his indignation had a splendor. . . .

"Ah! to live indignant, to live enraged at treacherous arts, at false honor, at universal mediocrity! To be unable to read a newspaper without paling in anger! To feel the continual and irresistible need of crying aloud what one thinks, above all when one is alone in thinking it, and to be ready to abandon all the sweets of life for it!"

I cite Emile Zola defending his own militant character far back in 1882.

But the history of intolerance and injustice is completed by the supremely tragic career of the Jews across the centuries. What a strange destiny! For the rôle of eternal dissent did not often win great defenders, accompanied as it was in the eyes of the world by their immolation in inscrutable superstitions and mysticism. Through the ages, the Jews surviving in dispersion suggested to lay eyes, mystery, the exotic, the unholy, mesmerism even. And in modern times, they were merchants and peddlars, insatiably avid of gold and deathlessly avid of revolution and Utopia.

The painful rôle of the Jews and the Dreyfus Affair was the inauguration of a social struggle broader than that which concerned only their fate or their persecution. Indeed, at an early stage of the struggle, the Dreyfus Affair (misleading name) ceased to be only a Jewish question and became a more or less bloodless civil war between two implacable forces in French life.

In 1789 the Jews had been accorded the Rights of Man by the Revolution. Many flocked to Paris, when Alsace was lost in 1870; others came from the Midi, where clusters of Spanish and Portuguese Jews had dwelt since the horrors of the sixteenth century. In 1880 there were perhaps three times as many Jews in Paris as there had been prior to 1870, although the number in itself was not large.

If France is the land of Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Robespierre, it is also the land of Cardinal Richelieu and Edouard Drumont. Between the poles of complete faith in Catholicism and

complete skepticism, there is no half-way dissent like Protestantism. Only in this way can the drastic alternations of modern France between sheer democracy and dictatorship be understood.

Superficially the Third Republic from 1870 on would appear a refuge for the Jews, or for any oppressed sect. To be a republican there was virtually synonymous with either indifference or opposition to Catholicism. It was foregone that religious skeptics, Protestants, Jews should be partisans of the Republic.

But in 1887, in the face of the effort of General Boulanger, "the man on horseback," toward a coup d'état, did the republican form of government seem permanent? The Royalists, the jingoes, had been outwitted and crushed. Was their union with the almost repudiated Church toward the ultimate overthrow of the Republic not logical? The religious revival of the century's last decade deemed among its enemies above all the Jews whose freedom and prosperity in France was felt obnoxious and dangerous. In the late '80's this sentiment spread remarkably among the masses who are readily hypnotized by a facile taboo or shibboleth. And then we had already noted toward 1887 the waning faith in Science.

Books like *Les Juifs, Rois de la République* ("The Jews, Kings of the Republic"), by Toussenel had appeared before Boulangism. And there was the extraordinarily venomous and crafty *La France Juive* ("Jewish France"), by Edouard Drumont. This book had an immense sale at the time of the Panama Canal scandals. The author's talent for inciting hatred and rage was admirable and ingenious.

With the increasing success of the anti-semitic movement, a group of Catholics and Royalists had emboldened themselves enough to go into banking on a scale which would surpass that of the usurious Jews and grasping Protestants. Pope Leo XIII blessed this great Christian bank (*L'Union Générale*), headed by a M. Bontoux, and even invested millions in its stock which Bontoux promised to return fourfold. Many thousands of the faithful,

"accepting the financial advice of their confessors" invested their savings likewise. And when, as a result of combined corruption and merciless competition—provided largely by the sugar magnate Lebaudy, a Catholic, as well as by Jewish and Protestant financiers, obviously—the *Union Générale* collapsed, the outcry was bitter and long. The "hand of the Israelites" was now detected everywhere, like "the hand of the Jesuits" earlier; in the failure of the Panama venture, as of the Boulanger movement, in the rise of socialism, strikes, anarchist outrages. . . . The "question" spread in short. Royalist papers joined in the outcry; while far-sighted republicans remained only the more distrustful of such campaigns, remembering how the clericals had supported the republic in 1848 only to strangle it with Napoleon III. The masses indeed, the working class, the average small merchant, tended toward free-thinking. The efforts of the priests or the Chauvinists, movements such as the "Sacred Heart of Jesus," the Lourdes miracles, had borne little fruit.

The claim of an "imperium in imperio," of Jews secretly organized to dominate the world, made progress; although many observers remark on the extensive assimilation of the Jews, more complete in Paris than elsewhere, and their noteworthy services in the arts and professions.

The views of Edouard Drumont, of Paul Déroulède, another violent Nationalist leader, were said to be skillfully manipulated by clericals. Drumont was a unique "character." Nature by one of her familiar freaks had branded upon his face the uglier traits of the despised race. His invective was eloquent, brazen, never subdued. His mission in life had been found. In private conversation he was reported to admire the Jews unstintedly.

In 1892, Drumont founded *La Libre Parole* (Free Speech!), a daily journal whose motives were anti-semitism, royalism, Catholicism, anti-semitism, anti-semitism. . . . Bizarre newspaper; the yellowing years have not dimmed its fantastic colors.

The formula, the technique of Drumont's *La Libre Parole*,

may be found in a very curious and rare volume published in *Pneumatopolis* (Paris) in 5871 (1785):

"If you wish to make the Telucians (Lutecians, i.e. Parisians) believe some lie, offer it boldly as the truth; you will be refuted; ignore all criticism, but repeat the same lie with more boldness again; you will be criticized anew; do not answer them; and then repeat what you have said before, in a tone of the utmost assurance. Do not tire of following this procedure; and in spite of all the clamors of your adversaries, your impudence will make the lie pass as the truth."

Emile Zola, writing in the *Figaro* again, in 1896 (*Nouvelle Campagne*), noted the growth of the anti-Jewish movement with repulsion. In this growing lust to exterminate a race, to crush a dissenting sect, he saw the fruit of countless revolutions, of numberless martyrdoms, lost. His essay, *Pour les Juifs*, won him little popularity in certain quarters. Was he not also author of that unpatriotic novel, *La Débâcle?*

The army caste was particularly exemplary of this growing intolerance. Jewish officers were unquestionably discriminated against, provoked, and in one or two instances, such as that of Morès-Mayer, killed in unequal duels. Jewish courage was questioned in the columns of *La Libre Parole*. Commissions in the army were deemed to belong only to blue-blooded Catholic families, to the sons of devout Royalists, many of whom under the hated Republic would serve in no other capacity.

Toward 1894, the General Staff of the French Army had become aware of a "leakage" of military secrets. Since 1870, in the era of *Revanche* against Germany, the service of espionage and counter-espionage had under zealous leadership assumed a considerable, an excessive character. The obscure network of spying and "baiting" operations is reminiscent of Italy in the days of the

Borgias. The notorious *cabinet noir* employed sleuths, female sirens, derelicts, traitors, desperadoes. Militarism steeped itself in an atmosphere of Nick Carter and Sherlock Holmes.

Bits of wastepaper from the offices of the German Military Attaché, Colonel von Schwarzkoppen, and the Italian Attaché, Panizzardi, dribbled regularly (almost passively!) into the hands of Colonel Sandherr, an Alsatian, who was head of the French Secret Service. (Alsatians and Lothringians, like Poincaré and Maurice Barrès, bore the air for a long time of composing the more implacable patriots). It was known at any rate that the enemy had an informer of high standing in the French army; and the fact caused a deep *malaise.*

During the summer of 1894, a document arrived which caused even greater consternation in the General Staff. It was held certainly to originate from the German embassy, and its fragments, written on a kind of photographer's paper, composed the famous "*bordereau*" (running account or schedule), that indicated the documents which its author may have been sending at the same time. That the military documents mentioned were ever sent, or were sent under separate cover, or whether by courier or post, remained unknown.

The text of this celebrated document follows:

"*Although without news, as to whether you wish to see me, I am sending you in the meantime, sir, some interesting information:*

"1) *A note on the hydraulic recoil of the 120, and the way in which it is used.*

"2) *A note on covering troops, some changes brought in by a new plan.*

"3) *A note on changes in artillery formations.*

"4) *A note in reference to the Madagascar expedition.*

"5) *The projected shooting manual of the field-artillery* (Mar. 14, 1894).

"This last document is extremely difficult for one to procure *and I can only have it at my disposition for a very few days. The minister of war sent only a specified number of them to the corps, and the corps is responsible for them. Each officer retained must return his copy after the maneuvers.*

"So if you wish to take what interests you from it and leave it for me, afterward, I shall take it back. That is, if you do not wish me to have it copied in extenso and send you the copy.

"I am about to leave for maneuvers."

There was an uncommon, if silent commotion in the High Command. The terrible conclusion that the German Attaché had a high French officer as his informer, haunted them; in fact, it was soon concluded that he was a member of the General Staff! Nothing justified this last conclusion, for the consensus of authorities who later reviewed "the Affair." And indeed, in the rage to seize the traitor, all else was passed over: that for instance, the *bordereau* was grammatically and technically incorrect; that the informer was ignorant of artillery matters; that the information was actually of inferior significance; that the date of departure, and the date of writing this *bordereau*, indicated the spy not to have witnessed the artillery maneuvers, but other less important ones of the same time; nor was the fact noted that the paper had remained for weeks in the hands of Major Henry, aide to the Secret Service Chief, before he had finally communicated it, as having come "through the usual channels," i.e. among the scraps gleaned from the German Attaché.

The fixed idea of an officer of the General Staff had been proposed by one of the mysterious personages of the "dark cabinet," Val Carlos, who had come floating in from Berlin. It was clung to.

Colonel Sandherr, head of the espionage bureau, was ordered to leave no stone unturned toward catching the traitor. All operations were naturally conducted in the utmost secrecy. The Minister of War knew; certain officers knew; some of the highest gen-

erals of the War-College were ignorant of it. Little progress was made for some weeks (since September 24, 1898, the day that Henry turned over his finding), when a Colonel Abboville suggested that the traitor must be an *officier stagiaire* (one who was passing from bureau to bureau in completing his training for strategy); and moreover, one who belonged to the artillery division. The field was thus circumscribed from many thousands, to a low number. And the heads of the Secret Service, consulting the lists, and they were readers of *La Libre Parole*, stopped significantly before the name of a Jewish officer, Captain Dreyfus, the only Jewish officer embraced in the work of the General Staff, and one who belonged to an artillery division. It was now that certain officers recalled having sent him "a bad note;" and, consulting his letters in order to compare his handwriting to that of the *bordereau*, they noted what seemed an indubitable resemblance. It may have been only a "vague" resemblance, including as it did striking divergences too in their lay eyes; but they had in the line of their hypothesis: member of the General Staff, "stage-officer," artillery officer, and finally, for Colonel Sandherr, Secret Service Chief, was a pious antisemite, they had, Jew. . . .

The aides communicated their clue to the heads of the General Staff, Generals Gonse and Boisdeffre and to General Mercier, Minister of War; there was also a consultation with part of the Ministry: Premier Dupuy, Gabriel Hanotaux, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Guérin. Hanotaux, fearing diplomatic complications, war even, urged prudence, and even hushing up the affair. General Saussier, Commander-in-Chief, urged likewise. The Cabinet authorized the Minister of War in the meantime to pursue a rigorous although discreet examination. Gobert, signature expert of the Bank of France, was called in; he testified (without knowing who was involved) that the writings might be of different hands. Another expert, however, Alphonse Bertillon, said: "Unless it is a forgery, the handwriting of the *bordereau* and of the letters submitted is of the same hand." Covered by this testimony *only*,

General Mercier proceeded to the arrest of Dreyfus (October 15, 1894).

1 1 1

Alfred Dreyfus, a native of Mulhouse, Alsace, was thirty-five years of age, the third son of a wealthy manufacturer. After the cruel and disorganizing possession of Alsace by the Germans, one brother, Léon, had acquired German citizenship in order to hold the family mill; all the rest of the family had, however, gone to Paris and remained French in their allegiance, a step which was, in reality, little to their interests. Mathieu, the second brother, had become a business man; he was a person of considerable force and intelligence. Alfred, deeply impressed by their tragic expatriation, had sought a military career, become an officer, and an ardent, resolute exponent of *Revanche*. He had even been imbued for a time, like numerous other military men, with the nationalistic fever for General Boulanger in 1886-1887.

Alfred Dreyfus, calm, methodical, sensitive, had enjoyed an exceptional record at the Military School; he was a brilliant mathematician; in a series of examinations, he had advanced himself rapidly (despite instances of lamentable prejudice), even receiving "excellent notes" as a Lieutenant of artillery. Passing at length through the difficult tests of the War-College, he established himself among the very first, but only after protests succeeded in retaining ninth place on the list. He was thus lodged in the General Staff, despite the repugnance of certain high officers; a Captain of artillery at the age of thirty-three.

It might be added as well, that he had married somewhat properly, a Mlle. Lucie Hadamard, daughter of a prominent diamond merchant; and that both through his own family and his wife's means, he enjoyed a considerable income beside the fair one of an officer. There had been no unusual irregularity in his private life, and his marriage had borne two children. In his rather self-assured, reflective personality, his methodical and military spirit, there

seemed little promise of world-scandal, disaster, intrigue. He was known to be courageous, a daring horseman, extremely proud of his uniform, excessively ambitious, longing perhaps to go far toward the Highest Command. . . .

It was a matter of note that at certain recent maneuvers Lieutenant-General Boisdeffre had shown the correct and brilliant officer the favor of riding in his company and conversing with him a long time.

Above all Alfred Dreyfus loved his children. To fasten suspicion upon him, it needed all the force of prejudice, which sees in every Jew, even rich and tranquil, a man of greed, amenable to all villainies paid for; it needed also the fever caused by the *bordereau*, the longing to end this nightmare; the state of mind in short that had caused the provocation and killing of Lieutenant Mayer.

Major Du Paty de Clam, the bearer of a noble name, a society-favorite, imaginative, romantic, was instructed to make an "inquest," to examine and arrest Captain Dreyfus. As something of a graphologist himself, he had been familiar with the affair from the beginning, was firmly convinced of the Jew's guilt, and embraced the occasion to render a signal and flamboyant service to the fatherland.

Du Paty, in the most subtle manner, ordered Dreyfus to appear in civilian clothing, at the War Ministry, for an inspection of "stage-officers."

The room was entirely covered with mirrors! There were several military functionaries attending.

Professing to have injured his finger, Du Paty suddenly asked Captain Dreyfus to sit down and write at his dictation a letter to the Minister, who was not present, a letter in which he employed the words of the sinister *bordereau:* "Although without news, etc. . . ." As he dictated, pacing up and down, he watched the man's face from *all aspects* in the innumerable angles of the mirrors. Surely Dreyfus, hearing these words, would faint with appre-

hension. (In an adjoining dressing-room a loaded revolver lay on a table so that he might do himself justice!) Ah, Du Paty had a profound knowledge of the serialized newspaper novels of the time!

Strange as the session is Captain Dreyfus writes calmly.

Suddenly Du Paty pounces upon him:

"Your hands are trembling?"

"My fingers are a little cold." It was a chilly October day. (Yet facsimiles of this dictated letter published afterward show no convolutions.)

Then Du Paty placed his hand on Dreyfus' shoulder; crying sternly:

"In the name of the law, I arrest you; you are accused of the crime of high treason!"

The self-contained, repressed Dreyfus, in his astonishment, found few words to cry out his innocence. He repulsed the pistol offered him. He submitted willingly to searching. He cried out at length:

"Take my keys, open everything in my house! I am innocent, I swear to you!"

He was informed to his stupefaction of the "long inquest" that had been made, and of "unquestionable proofs" that would be shown him later. He was placed in the charge of Major Henry, who was told to lock him up in the military prison of the rue Cherche-Midi.

Du Paty, with attendants, raided the Dreyfus home, terrorized his wife, found nothing; but with an air of utter mystery, he left her ignorant of her husband's fate for weeks and threatened her with the most terrible consequences if she divulged in any way what might be pending.

The Governor of the Cherche-Midi, an old veteran named Forzinetti, was told to keep the imprisonment absolutely secret. In contact with Dreyfus, he felt curiously that the man did not look like a desperate spy. . . .

The Minister of War himself, Mercier, regarded the affair as a *provisory* arrest, and while conserving some doubts as yet, desired the business to remain secret until more decisive evidence had been procured.

Two weeks passed, while Dreyfus' emotions swung from despair to incredulity. Du Paty had entertained him with sudden Dumas-like visitations. He had made him write letters, standing, sitting, lying down, gloved. He would even have himself admitted to the wretch's cell while he was sleeping, and, *by flashing the sudden strong light of a hooded lantern* upon his face, attempt to surprise a grimace of guilt! . . .

Dreyfus' terrible anxiety was somewhat lightened when Du Paty finally showed him the text of the *bordereau*. Dreyfus with joy, after the hours of despair and longing to kill himself, which had menaced his reason, now asserted his innocence and the unlikelihood of the facts mentioned, of the incidents being linked to himself. Above all it was not his hand, never, never in the world! And the dates indicated gave him a perfect alibi.

In the meantime, new experts had been called in. Bertillon, now aware of what it was all about, assured everybody that the *bordereau* could have been written only by Dreyfus "concealing his handwriting." Bertillon, falling into the rôle of a sinister crank, now unchained strange theories of graphology and anthropometry, by which he created a chart or map of the actions of Dreyfus' mind (based on the *bordereau*), which had led Dreyfus to make revelations of military documents to the foreign powers!

Other experts introduced showed uncertainty; some were influenced by Bertillon's prestige. One found the writings utterly different. Another spoke of a strange visitation to his house in the night, which led him to suppose the Jewish officer's guilt!

Briefly, the evidence so far was not assuring enough.

The "investigation," thus far fruitless, was cut short by a curious incident.

On October 29, 1894, two weeks after the arrest, a small item appeared in that advanced journal of Drumont's, *La Libre Parole,* alluding in veiled terms to the affair, which it had been planned to maintain so secret in fear of foreign complications:

"Is it true that recently there has taken place a very important military arrest, and that the person is accused of espionage? Why do the authorities guard silence? . . ."

Two days later, the whole jingo press was aflame with the story, pouring broadsides into the Ministry and the General Command. Obviously the war-department had its hand forced now.

Who had done this? Were there uneasy personalities anxious to shorten all "investigation"?

Major Henry, the broad, peasant-like aide of the Secret-Service through his extraordinary friend, Major Esterhazy, it is now known, had sent word to Drumont. . . .

And now the cry went up: "It is a Jew that is guilty of treason."

What a beautiful case for the yellow press at this time above all!

So efficient were the underground wires through officers and even priests to the Royalist-Catholic press that it was proclaimed:

"The Jewish officer has made a complete confession.

"Absolute proofs are held against him.

"Because he is a Jew, the affair will be quashed, and hushed up."

Drumont attacked the Minister of War with typical élan, with great halloas. Mercier was "irresponsible" because his first uneasily relinquished statement mentioned only "presumed" treason, and "provisory" arrest. The Jews were trying to gain time. Even the chiefs of the Army were accessible to the sinister Jewish "Syndicate"!

The whole press thundered with the news and daily developments; ("*All Israel is in movement!*") and the Minister of For-

eign Affairs was in a panic. There was a hasty consultation. Some of the Generals of the Supreme Command, Gonse, Billot, had scarcely been informed of the affair.

The informing of Drumont was an important turn.

Mercier, precipitated by the accusations, announced now that he would take the sternest measures to safeguard the Republic. He promised an immediate, merciless trial. It is said that military leaders, off the field of battle, are the most timid of men. Mercier had had some parliamentary successes, and he would show now that none could outdo him in patriotism.

Calling the cabinet together, he mentioned no other evidence than the *bordereau,* but assured the ministry that Dreyfus was "absolutely guilty." He was authorized to prosecute.

Public opinion had already condemned the man. Latent anti-semitism, anxiety for the country, rage filled the public. The man-in-the-street of Marseilles, of Toulouse, *knew* that "Dreyfus had confessed." As to the Jews, one might have expected it of them!

Three weeks before the trial, Mercier announced in an interview that Dreyfus was "absolutely guilty," a strange procedure. But once it was known that he would go to the limit, the tone of the jingoes, Drumont, Rochefort, Déroulède, changed from ill-disguised blackmail (hints of negotiation with the Jews!), to utter adulation.

"You can be only for Mercier or Dreyfus," they said. "If Dreyfus is acquitted, Mercier falls!"

Major Besson d'Ormescheville was entrusted with the prosecution. He proceeded to fill a "portfolio" with whatever incriminating documents he could gather. It was rather watery. There were now plenty of officers to be found who remembered "strange looks," possibilities, suspicious gestures. But there was little new. Some moderate bachelor *liaisons.* The rectitude thereafter of his marital life was merely an indication to them of his dual nature, his *diabolism!*

The "portfolio" was in fact so weak that Mercier and the prosecuting officer decided that in the trial the accused officer and his counsel would be confronted only with the *bordereau;* the "portfolio" containing at first some sixty "documents" would be exhibited privately to the judges in secret-session in another chamber. Maître Demange, who had agreed to be Dreyfus' attorney, if the reading of the "secret portfolio" assured him of the man's innocence, was convinced of its inanity.

But he could not discuss it! He could refute only the *bordereau.*

The trial was rather flat.

Alfred Dreyfus was neither a conventional hero nor villain. His voice was too toneless. His respect for his superiors was too manifest. His numerous assertions of innocence and denial were too dignified. In his heart he now rued the day that he had ever chosen the military career. Perhaps his reflective spirit, pessimistic, saw only a destiny in this kind of war which his comrades had declared against him. He perceived clearly the nature of the trial. He was the butt of eternity! He was a whole race, under an ethnical ban! There was a fatalism in his every gesture. . . .

December 22, 1894, Dreyfus was condemned to degradation and imprisonment for life in a foreign stronghold. Ah! a great day for the League of Patriots. But from now on the public must quiet down.

Visited by Du Paty de Clam, with an *offer of diminution of sentence* if he made a confession, he replied that he had nothing to avow, not even "baiting" of the enemy; he would request only that they continue the search for the real traitor once he was gone. (Yet one of the officers who saw him last, maintained that he had admitted being an *agent provocateur,* against the enemy power!)

Strangely touched by the man's obduracy Du Paty had exclaimed:

"If you are truly innocent, you are the greatest martyr of all the centuries!"

In these last days on French soil, Dreyfus had contlar *train-* suicide. But the Governor of the Cherche-Midi had stopped became and his wife and brother had besought him to guard his life a. his reason so that he could appear again to clear himself. They vowed their whole lives, all that they had in the world to this task.

There were some serious political events at this moment. The German Government, which could have chosen to remain silent, protested that it knew nothing of Dreyfus, and a crisis was narrowly averted (always secretly). The French Premier, Casimir-Perier, and his Cabinet resigned and were succeeded by one strange to the affair.*

On the 5th of January, 1895, Dreyfus was "degraded." Picturesque ceremony: in the presence of the whole corps of his comrades, drawn up in lines, the customary solemn formula was pronounced by a General, whereupon an adjutant stepped forward and tore from him all his insignia and gold braid and broke his sword across his knee with a dry sound. A cry of hatred arose from all the assembled officers. Dreyfus, pale but still superior and well-controlled, finally flung up his arms and cried to them at the top of his voice:

"You are degrading an innocent man! Long live France! Long live the army!"

As he passed between the long lines of officers, a young fanatic shouting an imprecation stepped forward and struck him across the cheek with the hilt of his sword, leaving a bleeding gash across his face.

Outside the gates, a great crowd filled the Champ de Mars, and through the grill, the tall figure of Dreyfus marching with his dry military step, limned clearly in the strong sunlight, seemed sinister, defiant." Their impassioned outcry rose up in a vast roar:

"*A mort Dreyfus! Mort au Juif! Mort au traitre!*"

* From now on ministries succeed each other with lightning-like rapidity.

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quiet. The Affair was all but forgotten; and the
rnals had never given it much more space than
yage of Monsieur Zola to Rome to visit the Pope
894, an event of astonishing interest to the great
e. The government, too, wanted the Affair for-
gotten. [illegible] nest people ever thought of the possibility of
Dreyfus being innocent, they would ask themselves, "Can the whole government, can the whole Army be insane?" There were only two men who often wondered if the French Army really were insane: one was the German Military Attaché, and the other was the Italian Military Attaché.

Alfred Dreyfus was now in "Devil's Island," off French Guiana. A bald rock, a fearful climate, the wall of the eternal sea before his eyes—and soon this even was cut off by a palisade. He struggled dimly against solitude, fever, oncoming madness. The years passed, and he heard from no one in response to his letters. His hair turned white. He lost at times the power of speech. . . .

* * *

Emile Zola had been in Rome. Returning late in December, 1894, he had paid little attention to the Affair. One evening in January he was dining with the failing Alphonse Daudet. It was on this occasion that young Léon Daudet regaled them with an account of how the Jewish traitor had been degraded. He painted it vividly, the slapping incident, the cries of innocence, the roaring of the mob.

"The dean of novelists felt his old power of indignation rise in him." The one against the many! Military justice! He must be right, and the mob wrong! *He* must be innocent, and what a superb drama, what a martyrdom, if he were! His voice choking with disgust he cried:

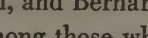
"He must be innocent! I could wager that he is innocent!"

But nearly three years passed and little more was heard of

the Affair. Zola, engrossed in Rome, then Paris, the regular *train-train* of his life, forgot it completely. In fact it scarcely became a great Affair until Zola remembered it again.

The Dreyfus family, rich and influential, had never rested. Mathieu gave up all other interests to redeem his brother. The letters which came from Devil's Island were a ceaseless, anguished cry of innocence that made the hearts of his kin, of those who knew him, bleed. They could not be answered through the cruel surveillance in force. There was not the slightest clue. There seemed no way for the family to penetrate into secrets of the Army that would reveal the real traitor, if there was one. They had waited for the whipped up public feeling to ebb; now it had almost ebbed too low.

And there were powerful and valiant Jews who would have given all to remove the stain upon their race, since it was thus that their enemies held the episode. Joseph Reinach, the truculent Deputy, publicist, historian, and Bernard Lazare, a brilliant essayist and journalist, were among those who were early convinced of the irregularity of the trial. "Lazare would have run to the ends of the earth to gain a proselyte." Reinach waded through innumerable duels, as did Lazare, to silence the calumniators of his race.



It was not until the autumn of 1897, three years after the condemnation of the Jewish officer, that the "Affair" lost its character of a *fait divers,* a judiciary error, and began to impassion all France and soon, all the world.

Zola having completed *Paris,* came in from Médan for the winter season.

In between novels,—"I don't know what I would have done, if I had been in the midst of a book!" he had exclaimed—the new projects he was casting were at great variance with his earlier literary principles: he hoped to embody his views on what future

human society should be, on the kind of collective program that would heal the "social sores" which his whole career had been devoted to displaying. Like a good surgeon of a Naturalist, he had with the aid of his documents opened up all the tumors, he had posed all the *problems;* now with the aid of further documents, girding up his athletic loins, it would be his logical if somewhat laborious, business, to offer the solutions.

This new course (the "new Zola"), had been born, we have seen, out of the complete fulfillment of the last decade, renewed passion, fatherhood, the expansion in short of his social conscience to a degree where he felt the dolorous negations of his earlier books inconsistent with his present faith in himself and in humanity.

No, if he were given the time—he was approaching sixty—he would not end on the old dour note. . . .

His private life with its two households had for some time relapsed into a state of organized tranquillity which gave him great satisfaction. The mornings belonged to his work, his afternoons to his mistress and children. As soon as he had finished his afternoon siesta, toward four, he could be heard turning the key in the lock at the rue St. Lazare. He would come with his hands laden with flowers, or packages of cakes and bon-bons. The florists of the Place du Havre came to know him well. On some days he would buy out the whole stall and the flower-girl would have to accompany him. . . . At tea the children would be well-behaved so long as he was there. "There must be no quarreling," he would say; "you must wait until after I have left." Mme. Rozerot would be happy but composed.

In the summer they had occupied for a time a little house near Médan which lay on the opposite side of the Seine. "We could see the big house off in the distance," the daughter remembered. "Morning and night we would send greetings to each other. And every two or three days my father would traverse the broad highway that crossed the plain, protecting himself from the hot

in with a large gray-and-green umbrella such as was used in hose days." Later when they moved to a nearer cottage in the oods close by, he would do the route on a bicycle. "I can still ee him coming in the rain, or quite breathless, on days of swelter-ng heat, unable to resist the longing to come."

And ultimately even Mme. Zola appeared reconciled, for eriods, to the singular family situation. In Paris he would come to ake Denise and Jacques for a ride. Mme. Zola would be waiting n a carriage and they would go to the Bois de Boulogne or the uileries. "I can still see my father and his wife, walking behind s, holding each others' arms," writes Denise. "They would look t us and laugh with all their hearts. . . . Only on these occa-ions my mother always seemed more grave. . . ."

When suddenly all his plans were hurled aside; forgotten, ne order, the private tranquillity he doted on, the security he had von—all this in the storm that enveloped him.

Bernard Lazare had come to Zola earlier in this year, as he ad come to everybody. But truth, certainties, such as would al-ays have moved Zola, were still wanting. Neither he nor Mathieu reyfus nor even Scheurer-Kestner, the Protestant statesman, hom they had interested, had certain proofs of anything.

The entrance of Scheurer-Kestner into the affair, publicly, in e summer of 1897, was of immense significance. This man was nown as an extraordinary public character: formerly the col-ague of Gambetta in founding the Third Republic, he had been r long years the "last" Senator from Alsace; wealthy, respected the highest places, he had done signal service; he was opposed course to clerical domination, and as an Alsatian had been oved by the endless pleas of the Dreyfuses for at least a re-amination of the case.

His own inquest (he was something of a Puritan) had indi-ted to him merely the possibility of doubt. The secret informa-on of the General Staff he had no access to; and his old friend,

General Billot, now Minister of War, had assured him during a visit that evidence existed and was final. A series of events going on during the past year behind the scenes, came strangely to his attention and evoked in him a beautiful case of public conscience.

For nearly two years past, the new head of the Secret Service had been a certain Lieutenant-Colonel Georges Picquart. An able and brilliant young officer, this man pursued the business of reorganizing his department with ardor and diligence. His love of his work and his logical and penetrating faculties brought him to a curious pass.

The Dreyfus Affair, General Boisdeffre had told him, was not finished yet. In the mind of this Chief of the General Staff, the "portfolio" was still rather thin, and he had urged his subordinate to gather more conclusive evidence in case the Affair were ever revived. Picquart had gone about this vigorously, and to his chagrin found himself making no progress whatsoever. But one day his aides (during the absence of Colonel Henry), handed him a most suspicious message emanating from the German Attaché Schwarzkoppen, to a Major Walsin-Esterhazy of the French Infantry. It was the later famous "*petit bleu*" or pneumatic message:

Major Esterhazy,
27, rue de la Bienfaisance,
PARIS.

Sir,

I await a more detailed explanation than the one you gave me the other day on the question we were considering. Therefore, I beg you to let me have it in writing so that I may be able to judge whether I ought to continue my relations with the R. company.

C.

It formed an irrefutable testimony of treasonable correspondence with the German Attaché!

Was there another traitor among the corps of officers? Was he the accomplice of Dreyfus?

Picquart investigated thoroughly the possible connections of this new "affair" with the older one. The "notes" he received on "Count" Ferdinand Walsin-Esterhazy were very bad.

The man was a descendant through an illegitimate French branch of a ducal house of Hungary, one of the oldest and most famous pedigrees of Europe. His father had been a General in the French army. He himself had risen to the rank of Major, by 1892. A tall, lean fellow, with a striking, wolf-like visage, great yellow moustaches, fiery small eyes, bizarre, full of verve, given to debauchery, gambling, moments of indiscipline and desperation. The "*rastoquouère*" his comrades called him, which means something of a South American mining promoter on a spree in Paris. Esterhazy's diverting raillery often turned into sheer bitterness; he was "unjustly treated," he was "not appreciated;" they starved him; he would rant by the hour against the country whose army he served. . . .*

It was in examining his letters that Picquart was struck by the clear resemblance of the handwriting to that of the famous Dreyfus *bordereau*, of which he had a photograph. That odd expert, Bertillon, on seeing a specimen of Eserhazy's correspondence agreed with him. But on being told that it was of recent make, proposed that "the Jews had found someone to imitate the handwriting of the *bordereau* perfectly!"

For Picquart everything, however, was terribly clear. If Esterhazy was actually the author of this document, then Dreyfus was victim of an unheard of error! But there were the other "secret documents" on which the traitor had really been convicted. He had

* *Served ill!* It was established long after that he received 2.000 marks ($500) a month from the German Military Attaché. But after a short time he was found useless, Reinach states, and dropped from the payroll.

them brought to him (always in the absence of his aide, Colonel Henry), the famed "secret portfolio," which despite orders had not been destroyed yet. Looking into this, he saw that there was no real evidence here, nothing, nothing! A tissue of suppositions, improbabilities, nonsense!

Picquart was one of those bright, strong young men whose minds move in straight lines. Perhaps he was not subtle enough. Perhaps there was too much Teutonic stock in him, since he too came from one of the lost eastern Provinces, Lorraine. His service would be in rooting out this abominable error, in averting the terrible catastrophe, the disgrace, sure to come, by acting in time, also in nabbing once and for all the actual traitor.

He went with his discovery to his superiors, Lieutenant-General Gonse, Commander-in-Chief Boisdeffre, War Secretary General Billot, and did not at first notice or apply their coolness toward his accomplishment. Missing the tactfully phrased nudges of Commander-in-Chief Boisdeffre (who confessed every day with the brilliant and hypnotizing Jesuit, Father Dulac), Picquart crudely went on piling up evidence against Esterhazy and clearing Dreyfus.

They brought him up quickly. He should have realized that the reopening of the Dreyfus Affair was "not desired;" that the sacrifice of this man, innocent or culpable, was "deemed necessary for the honor of the Army, the Secret Service Department, and the General Staff, all glorified in the triumphant judgment of 1894. The Army of France asking pardon for this Jew, what a nightmare!

Picquart, although deeply attached to his career, loving his uniform, ambitious, found that he had gone too far before perceiving his lonely position. The amount of crawling back he would have to do now, the vivid closing up of a tomb on a living man, this was a sore burden upon a clear-sighted and reasoning conscience.

In an altercation he had cried: "But I shall not carry the secret with me into my grave!"

He had subsided into discipline. But from now on he was a oomed man.

Henry, his aide, had come back. Henceforth, his machinations ere palpable, and the records reveal some unspeakable bondage erhaps, to the traitor he was bent on protecting at all costs.

Henry proceeded to undermine Picquart.

The General Staff, in terror, sent Picquart away on a "special ission" into the deserts of Africa. Picquart was engulfed in ob-vion. Orders sent him to a God-forsaken outpost where his life as deliberately endangered. He, too, knew the bitterness of a kind f exile with a doom hanging over him. . . .

The human beings who composed the Supreme Command of e French Army now, in the defense of their original crime, were npelled to cover their traces with further crimes. They had de-ided also to get rid of the bandit, Esterhazy, without having an-ther "Affair." But he knew too much! And they found themselves ompelled to protect him, to exalt him. There were further docu-ents placed in the famous "secret portfolio," one a most palpable orgery by Henry; there was a veritable edifice of falsifications rected to crush Picquart (whom they now hysterically deemed sold to the Jews") as well as the Dreyfus family, known to be uietly moving to re-open the case.

Even the press was fortified, but through naïve methods that ere destined to rebound upon them. Henry, through Esterhazy, ho was now linked with the jingo-royalist press, whispered news garbled form of a despatch incriminating Dreyfus, *Canaille de* . . . . ("Vermin-D . . ." note, later proved to be false) to e *Eclair*, September 14, 1896. Also in the *Matin*, through a series accidents, a facsimile of the famous *bordereau* leaked out, and ow all the experts in the world could remark the difference be-veen this and Dreyfus' handwriting!

Things began to move rapidly in the summer of 1897, and to pen up. Henry emboldened himself so far as to persecute Pic-

quart, who was still nominally his chief, by letters containing menaces, and indicating intrigues against the man. Picquart, aware now that there was no hope for his career, deeming Henry "authorized," asked for leave, and came north to France. He consulted an old family confidant, the attorney Leblois, upright and sagacious man, making (in his fear that his days were numbered), a complete breast of the whole affair under vow of secrecy, so that his name might be cleared some day if there were another case of "military justice."

Leblois, son of a Strasbourg pastor, could not sleep with this horrible secret. Picquart had even left letters between General Gonse and himself with him, which showed the awareness of the General Staff of the true state of things. It was not only the horror of Dreyfus' fate, but the doom which awaited his friend Picquart that agonized him. His haggard steps led him one day to Senator Scheurer-Kestner. He wanted to save Dreyfus, and through Dreyfus, Picquart. This step was utterly against the clear instructions of Picquart.

Now the excessively scrupulous, the generous-souled Scheurer-Kestner saw the whole horrible drama in all its colors. He was terribly informed. He spread the rumor of his new conviction. He went to General Billot, and pleaded that the reparation come from the Army. Billot reiterated the "secret portfolio" business, the *coup de massue*. Alas, his "finishing stroke" was the forgery of Colonel Henry! Scheurer was so terribly informed that he even told him of his suspicion to this effect. Yet he temporized. He agreed to give them time: two weeks. But by now the friends of Esterhazy were forearmed. The whole nationalist press thundered with unison against Scheurer-Kestner.

This old man of seventy, who had given such distinguished services to his country, this statesman with a "conscience," knew a Calvary which he could never have dreamed. He was heaped with slander, to which he did not reply. He had not even revealed what he knew to Mathieu Dreyfus. He waited while he prepared

his campaign, his interpellation in the Senate. From now on his life, he had declared, was devoted to the cause of Dreyfus.

Mathieu Dreyfus and Lazare had caused a facsimile of the *bordereau* to be printed in brochures, in placards, and broadcast everywhere. A banker named Castro recognized the writing unmistakably. Others had remained silent. But he came at once to Mathieu Dreyfus and gave the name of Major Esterhazy, with whom he had often done business.

Mathieu Dreyfus ran to Scheurer-Kestner.

"*Esterhazy?* Is that the name?" he besought him frantically.

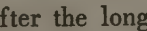
"Yes," said Scheurer-Kestner.

All was clear now! After the long, maddening search, they had the traitor. They would denounce him at once. There would be a new trial in which the whole case would be spilled with sunlight. There would be revision. . . .

It was incredibly Dumas.

Even in Devil's Island, where Alfred Dreyfus expiated on his desolate rocks, a guardian whispered to him:

"Have no fear! Somebody is caring for you over there!"



Mathieu Dreyfus now charges Esterhazy with treason, and demands a trial of the picturesque Major. Great commotion in the press.

The "Dreyfusards" form their ranks. A portion of conscientious public opinion follows them: the Independent *Figaro*, the Radical *Siècle*.

The word of command throughout the mass of the popular press, accepted by three-quarters of France's population was:

"The Dreyfusards are insulting the honor of the army, in accusing one officer of treason and seven commanding ones of perjury; they are allies of our enemies; this whole machination is engineered by the 'cosmopolitan syndicate' (the Jewish Syndicate),

IN THE FURY OF THE DREYFUS AFFAIR

The "Prussians," Zola, Clemenceau, Reinach, Scheurer-Kestner, Picquart, Labori and Yves Guyot Making a Last Stand Against the "Defenders of the Country."—Silhouette, 1898.

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J'Accuse...!

LETTRE AU PRÉSIDENT DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE

Par ÉMILE ZOLA

LETTRE
A M. FÉLIX FAURE
Président de la République

Monsieur le Président,

[illegible]

IN EXILE. A Familial Scene in the Garden of Zola's English Retreat: Zola, Mme. Rozerot, and the Children, Denise and Jacques.

whose treasury is in Berlin; an odious campaign, in short, which is a crime of *lèse-patrie.*"

The Dreyfusards, the "Syndicate," was composed of various and feeble factions; there were the moderates, who respectfully condemned a trial without evidence; there were the utterly convinced, who knew Dreyfus was innocent; finally there were the "Opportunists" in politics, who now for the first time saw in the Affair an excellent means of hammering the Government, the military institutions, the Church.

The whole country now rang with the Affair as the trial of Esterhazy approached. Every day the air of this land grew more charged with deceit, rage, explosives. All the Dreyfusards who could not be intimidated were to be discredited. Ridiculous charges were concocted against them; and against Picquart a mountain of calumny was stacked. Tactical "traps" in the form of helpful forgeries were laid against Mathieu Dreyfus and Scheurer-Kestner. Rumors of the desperate designs of the "Syndicate" fled wildly through Paris. Picquart was brought to Paris, under guard, like a foul suspect. In the parliament, Millerand, the moderate leader, insulted Joseph Reinach and fought a duel with him. As for Esterhazy, temporarily "retired" (and also flung aside as incompetent by the "enemy power"), he roved like a maddened wolf through Paris, crying: "*A la rescousse!* Rescue me from the Jews, or I shall bring everything down with me!" Word was sent to him not to worry. The military oligarchy had made his cause their own, perforce. A "veiled lady," *Madame X* (?) met him at nightfall, on a bridge, in a secluded park, and brought assurances every evening.

✓ ✓ ✓

"What a poignant drama, what superb characters!" Emile Zola wrote in the *Figaro* of November 25, 1897. There were Scheurer-Kestner, Picquart, Esterhazy.

For some weeks now, since he was back in Paris, he had been

able to think of nothing but the Affair. Picquart's counsel, Leblois, had seen him and made partial confidences which had moved him deeply. Then he had seen Scheurer-Kestner, upon invitation, and read the correspondence between General Gonse and Picquart. The whole mystery now had for him an "excessive clarity." And in the imposing person of the Alsatian senator, he saw "a life like a crystal. . . . Not a stain, not the slightest shortcoming." A man, moreover, who "held a certainty," to whom the truth was known.

Scheurer-Kestner had described to Zola his conference with General Billot.

"I am in a Jesuit close here!" the General had cried. "I am their chief and so I must follow them!"—"Reopen the whole case. Throw open the windows."—"No, we almost had war."—"But the facsimile of the *bordereau* was published everywhere, and Germany didn't budge," Scheurer had retorted.—"I tell you Dreyfus was convicted on other proofs which we dare not divulge."—"You are mocking at me, Billot. *And what if they are forgeries!*" Scheurer-Kestner had added.

"Then they know all! the General Staff?" Zola had cried.

"Yes."

"It is stupendous! It is the highest drama." Then he had exclaimed with the sudden intuition of a novelist that made the whole plot impeccable:

"They haven't anything! Their 'secret portfolio' is *empty*. I could swear it!"

Such a situation, nobody but Zola had had the imagination, the daring to divine. . . .

He had met also Rodays, the editor of the *Figaro*. They had discussed the whole case passionately in the street, amid the throngs of passersby, and then Zola "had suddenly decided to offer the *Figaro* a series of articles on the Affair, feeling the editor in accord with me."

His first article, temperate and objective in its tone, was on

Scheurer-Kestner. "One observes in these first pages," Zola later related *of himself*, "that the professional, the novelist was seduced first of all by such a drama. And pity, faith, the passion for truth and justice came afterward."

How "big and wise" this statesman was, he said. His high situation ruined; the peace and honor he merited forfeited, he remained silent under the most abominable slander of the "slimy press." Once he had known the truth, he had said: "I could not have lived . . . without acting."

Zola flayed the "imbecilic anti-semitism" which had been the bellows of these inflamed passions.

Of Dreyfus, "the punishment had been horrible, the public degradation, the miserable man prostrate in the prison of his island under the execration of a whole raging people. And if he were innocent, great God! what an immense shudder of pity! what cold horror at the thought that no reparation was possible!"

Certain documents, certain facts had become known to him, Zola related mysteriously, which rendered his conviction of the innocence of Dreyfus "absolute and unshakable."

He found himself "engaged without premeditation." To be sure he would have spoken out, some day or other, "*for silence had become impossible.*"

The next article, the following week, was on the so-called "Syndicate." Scheurer-Kestner "sold"? It was not hard to riddle the stories of the Syndicate. Ah, they needed a real syndicate, for the Truth had come falteringly and from people who were working in the dark, unaware of each other.

"Truth is on the march," he had ended, "and nothing will stop her!"

In the meantime fresh sensations: Mlle. Boulancy, former mistress of Major Esterhazy, made public letters in which the extraordinary man had denounced in the most furious invectives his country, his army, his superiors. "I should like to be at the head of a company of Uhlans, sabering the French, etc. . . .

What a beautiful orgy that would be in a Paris, conquered again!. . ."

There was a perceptible lull in the patriotic thundering. It was resumed, and Esterhazy was absolved with the aid of the most tortuous dialectic!

To minds like Zola's the present scene, with its legal monstrosities, with its hounding of Jews, its crushing of all protest, began to reveal a tragic moral crisis in the whole nation.

His third article in the *Figaro* (December 5, 1897), less reserved, was his last appearance in this journal. The paper had been boycotted by many of its readers, because of its impartial campaign; the stockholders had stepped in and dismissed the editor.

"And we have seen this, of all things, for amid so many horrors one may as well choose the most revolting, we have seen the press, the slimy press, continue to defend a French officer who had insulted the army and spat on the nation. . . . To return to religious wars, to renew religious persecution, one race exterminating another, in our emancipated century—I dare not believe that such an object can take preëminence in France!"

The trial of Esterhazy, which opens now, he calls "the first act, the curtain rising upon a fearful spectacle. . . ."

Zola's comments on the Affair had the immediate effect, like all his writings, of arousing a vigorous tempest.

He was an "Italian;" he was the "traitor" who had written *La Débâcle*; he had "sold himself to the Syndicate."

Edouard Drumont wrote characteristically: "When the false pontiff of Naturalism had the hilarious idea of throwing himself into the mélée supported by Jewish stipends . . . he appeared clearly what he was at bottom: the falsest, the most declamatory, the most verbose, the windiest of all the writers of this time.

"The day is not far when things will grow warm for Israel and its friends. . . ."

Become the target of slime and calumny, the medium of the

press closed to him now (gagged, as it were), Zola began to display an overweening interest in this struggle. For some fifteen or twenty years now, he had been a worthy bourgeois; he had withdrawn from "controversies." All that was stubborn, courageous, combative in him re-awoke. He was thirty years younger. He was the youth who had fought for Manet, who had written, "My Hates," and "The Naturalist Republic." It needed only such opposition from the pack to steel him, to throw him into the struggle on his own.

He began to issue pamphlets at his own cost and responsibility, with the intention of having them appear at fixed intervals.

"Letter to the Young Men" (December 14, 1897), was an impassioned and eloquent appeal: Where were these youthful bands who wandered the streets at the whim of their indignations and enthusiasm, going? Were they going to protest against some abuse of power? Were they going to redress a social wrong? Were they going to defend tolerance, independence, or to hiss some narrow sectarian, some hypocrite? No, no! They were going to hoot an old man, Scheurer-Kestner, who after a long life of labor and devotion had believed that he could with impunity sustain a generous cause! Ah, it had been different when Zola was young, and under the Second Empire, the youth of the Latin Quarter was moved in its extravagant way by noble passions, when it resisted force and oppression and partook of the sentiments which were to bring about the free Republic.

"Oh youth! remember the sufferings your fathers have undergone, the dreadful battles they have won, to gain the liberties you now enjoy! . . . Oh youth! be generous, be human."

This pamphlet was in truth a poem, and Zola had become the poet of this national drama. He saw that it was a considerable task he had assumed. What then would be the rôle of one of the heroes of this drama?

It was during this very time, in mid-December, 1897, that a

curious controversy raged over the aged bones of Voltaire, which reposed in the Panthéon. A mystifying individual, named John Grand-Carteret, had insisted vehemently and publicly that there was nothing but stones in the tomb of Voltaire. It was only through a legislative decree that the bier of the great man was at length now opened, and Zola was present at the ceremony, which revealed to the light of day the bony remains. Hamlet-wise Zola may have mused somewhat sadly over the skeleton of the eighteenth century hero.

But then his regard had turned upward to the single inscription on the funeral stone which commemorated the author of some two-score celebrated volumes:

"He defended Calas, Sirven, de la Barre, Montbailly."

Was this then, all that Voltaire desired to be remembered by? As the defender of Calas, and the others? And yet he was immortal. Despite Shakespeare, all of him lived! . . .

And is one too Shakespearean in insisting upon the symbolism of this scene?

It was perhaps only two or three days later that another incident took place which may well have provided the decisive impulse. His old "friend," Alphonse Daudet, stretched upon a sick bed for many years, died now, and Zola spoke at his funeral, December 16, 1897. He was deeply depressed as he read his speech and remembered his departed friends, Flaubert, Goncourt, Daudet. "They were giants, good giants, artisans of truth and of beauty. . . . We were four brothers; three have already departed. I remain alone."

His spectacles were dimmed with the mist of tears; a sense of utter loneliness, of veritable anguish, stirred in his voice.

The funeral cortège had been immense, swelled by Déroulède's Bands of Youth. As Zola read his speech, cries arose:

"Down with Zola! Down with the traitor! Bandit! Sold!"

It was with a new and deep emotion that he regarded his

persecutors. Then a man could not speak out what he believed! No honor was respected, no personage was sacred to the terrors of this mob rule directed by the yellow press and before which the Army and Ministry itself bowed!

To hoot Zola, to throw stones at his window, to parade before his house like a band of red Indians, what better way was there to precipitate this combative, strong-muscled man into fighting with every fiber in him, without quarter?

The great spectacle rolled on, with episodes of mounting violence as the "investigation" of Esterhazy proceeded. Esterhazy with beautiful arrogance demanded a trial himself. It was the lowest farce. Zola, now in communication with the other Dreyfusards, Georges Clemenceau, Jean Jaurès, Scheurer-Kestner, Anatole France, predicted to them that Esterhazy would be acquitted immediately. The military band marched to the trial and virtually presided over it. Under the charge preferred, that Esterhazy "was guilty of treason," and not simply that he was the author of the *bordereau* on which Alfred Dreyfus had been convicted, it was easy to defend him. The portfolio of the Dreyfusards was weak, legally; it was in fact, more than the General Staff had used to convict Dreyfus; but it was scarcely enough for civilians to put Esterhazy in the other man's place. By overawing the jury, by turning the trial into a condemnation of Picquart, finally by ordering "secret session" whenever threatening evidence appeared, Esterhazy was exonerated with ease.

He issued from the Cherche-Midi to the delirious acclaim of the "patriots" who bore him on their shoulders to his carriage. He became an international figure, the "martyr" of the Jews; the Prince of Orleans rushed forward to kiss him.

Colonel Picquart was arrested and imprisoned pending his indictment on various charges. The road to Revision was now closed; steps were being taken, through parliamentary measures to silence and to prosecute the Dreyfusards; the whole "slimy

press" as Zola incessantly called it, was in a tumult of triumph and hatred.

It was a dark hour for the soldiers of "truth and justice."

True, their ranks had been swelling for the past two months, since the case had transformed now the daily life of nearly every Frenchman. Ernest Vaughan, a well-known liberal journalist, together with Georges Clemenceau, had just established *l'Aurore*, an advance-guard newspaper for the pure purpose of defending the republic against the menacing influence of the militant and clerical press. This group represented the "opportunists"; and its leader, the "Tiger" (who had said: "I am so tired. . . . I have overthrown one Ministry after another in the hopes of turning up a good one") now advanced to the attack once more. He was soon joined by the Socialist leader, Jean Jaurès, known as "the greatest orator in Europe." For these men, the union of the Saber and the Church to crush the republic, presented a spectacle to conjure with.

The leonine Jaurès thundering from the proscenium of the House of Deputies cried: "They are about to deliver the republic to the Generals! . . . It is military anarchy!"

Pif-paf, pif-paf, there was slapping and fighting all over the House.

"You are in the Syndicate?" cried the Count de Bernis, to Jaurès.

"Pardon, Monsieur de Bernis?"

"You are in the Syndicate!"

"Monsieur de Bernis, you are a scoundrel and a coward!"

The Royalist deputy crawls up to the platform and slaps Jaurès resoundingly, who makes a great Christ-like gesture with his arm to the whole House.

The President, Félix Faure, and his ministers moved to silence

the whole affair; the country wanted quiet again, and the elections were approaching.

The baffled minority re-formed its ranks and took new breath. It recognized its errors. Ah! there were many errors. Mathieu Dreyfus and Scheurer-Kestner had been too Fabian; they had not even told all that they knew. They were terribly aware of the inhuman torrent against them. Many liberal leaders, like Ribot, Millerand, Bourgeois, preferred "not to swim upstream." Useless to seek justice further of the military courts. All *legal* doors toward revision seemed closed now. The whole country had been perverted by the press, and alarmed against the Dreyfusards.

CHAPTER XVII

THE TRIAL OF ZOLA: *"J'ACCUSE! . . ."*

"He was a moment of the conscience of man."—Anatole France.

THE world looked on with stupefaction at the terrible duel that was being fought in France. Many, outside, were beginning to believe that there had been a miscarriage of justice.

Where were the good people of France? They were virtually all anti-Dreyfusards. The whole affair was a mockery; before the world, the good name of France, of her "beautiful army," was being dragged in the mire, by Jews and professional trouble-makers. Ah! enough of the dirty business. The mass of France is her small *bourgeoisie*, her small landowners; their desire to "keep up appearances," which is profound, had never borne any relation to the visions of her emancipated minorities.

Emile Zola was a very timid man, physically. The sight of blood from a scratch had been enough to make him weep. A pet animal in pain put him in torment. Yet the *leit-motif* of his long career had been the instinct to manifest his courage in the face of opposition, to "hurl down the gauntlet."

Indifferent to the great adventure at first, then intrigued by its romance, now utterly involved in it, he was greatly changed from

the "peaceful *bourgeois*" who had impressed the members of the Academy with his respectable qualities.

Outside of his window in the rue de Bruxelles, for his address had been made known in *La Libre Parole*, stood the mob of Déroulède's "Indians." Indians indeed, at five francs a day.

"Down with Zola! Shame him! L-o-n-g l-i-v-e Esterhazy!"

A stone came hurtling up through the window, sending a shower of glass into the room.

Policemen stood by below and shrugged their shoulders.

Albert, the devoted young valet who had served Zola for some years, stood by the window opening menacing anonymous letters and suspicious packages. As he unfolded one carefully enveloped parcel which might well have contained an infernal machine, his nostrils began to dilate; and as he came to the last covering he emitted a cry of disgust. He flung the package of excrement hastily out through the window toward the crowd of bandits. . . . In the hours of warfare this was not the most unbearable of the ignominies heaped upon Emile Zola; and it was well that Albert was stout-hearted and loyal.

Zola had now thrown himself at the head of the Revisionists. In a burst of illumination he had comprehended the errors of the former leaders; he saw the necessity of a revolutionary step.

As the farce of the Esterhazy trial drew to its close, he worked madly, in a "breathlessness, a fever of anger and inspiration," from morning to night, a whole day. He had told nobody but his wife. He was obsessed. The great page of this drama was reserved for him. A conversation with Georges Clemenceau on the eve of Esterhazy's acquittal had put him on his verve. He confessed afterward to Joseph Reinach, that "he had had the fear of a primadonna that someone would have his idea at the same time, Clemenceau perhaps, and take away his part."

On the morrow, and during all of a third day, whipped on

by the triumphant cries of the *canaille* outside, he had finished his "Letter to M. Félix Faure, President of the Republic."

His pamphlets having had but a limited audience, he had been invited by Vaughan and Clemenceau to write now for the *Aurore*, a young newspaper with a growing public of a few score thousands.

When he reached the office of the newspaper, rue Montmartre, he found the Dreyfusards still troubled and hesitant over their defeat. He read the twenty pages of his Letter. A great hurrah went up from them.

It was the thunderbolt. It was the supremely simple, logical, militant step that only genius could have conceived.

Instead of litigating over obscure phases, fragments of the case, the Letter presented the whole Affair, from beginning to end, drenched with light. All the shadowy motives, the gaps, the things only divined, he filled in with an amazing intuition. He ended with a direct accusation of the whole government and the heads of the army which made him subject to the libel laws, which precipitated a trial of him, Emile Zola, in a *civil court*, superb opportunity for forcing a clean breast of the whole vile business in the open before the eyes of the world.

The men present, for virtually the first time, saw the whole drama in all its horror and beauty. It was written in a tone of supreme indignation; anger, bitterness, hope had crystallized into a protest of such might and eloquence that the very stones would be moved, the whole universe would crepitate.

"The child is now walking all by himself," Clemenceau had observed with his irrepressible irony.

They set to work at once publishing it. The small presses of the *Aurore* were ordered to quintuple their production overnight. The piece bore the title Zola had given it: "Letter to M. Félix Faure." It terminated with the revolutionary litany, "I accuse the President . . . I accuse the generals . . . I accuse the First Court Martial of having violated the law in condemning a man

upon evidence kept secret, and I accuse the Second Court Martial of having covered this illegality by order, in committing subsequently the judicial crime of acquitting with full knowledge a guilty man."

Searching for a more vigorous title, which could be blazed in headlines and posted everywhere, Clemenceau had finally exclaimed:

"But Zola himself indicates the title: '*J'accuse! . . .*'"

And thus it became known as "*J'accuse! . . .*" throughout the two hemispheres, in Melbourne, Boston, Rio, Bombay . . . when on the morning of January 13, 1898 the presses of the *Aurore* had run off the last of three hundred thousand copies.

LETTER TO M. FELIX FAURE, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

Mr. President,

Permit me, I beg you, in return for the gracious favors you once accorded me, to be concerned with regard to your just glory and to tell you that your record, so fair and fortunate thus far, is now threatened with the most shameful, the most ineffaceable blot.

You escaped safe and sane from the basest calumnies; you conquered all hearts. You seem radiant in the glory of a patriotic celebration . . . and are preparing to preside over the solemn triumph of our Universal Exposition, which is to crown our great century of work, truth and liberty. But what a clod of mud is flung upon your name—I was about to say your reign—through this abominable Dreyfus affair. A court-martial has but recently, by order, dared to acquit one, Esterhazy—a supreme slap at all truth, all justice! And it is done; France has this brand upon her visage; history will relate that it was during your administration that such a social crime could be committed.

Since they have dared, I too shall dare. I shall tell the truth because I pledged myself to tell it if justice, regularly empowered did not do so, fully, unmitigatedly. My duty is to speak; I have no wish to be an accomplice. My nights would be haunted by the spectre of the innocent being, expiating under the most frightful torture, a crime he never committed.

And it is to you, Mr. President, that I shall out this truth, with all the force of my revolt as an honest man. To your honor, I am convinced that you are ignorant of the crime. And to whom, then, shall I denounce

the malignant rabble of true culprits, if not to you, the highest magistrate in the country?

The truth, first, on the trial and condemnation of Dreyfus. One pernicious individual arranged, planned, concocted everything—Lieutenant-Colonel du Paty de Clam, then only Major. He is the whole Dreyfus Affair; we shall only understand it after an honest inquiry shall have definitely established all his acts and responsibilities. He appears as the foggy, complicated ruling-spirit, haunted by romantic intrigues, devouring serial novels, titillating himself with stolen papers, anonymous letters, strange trysts, mysterious women who come by night to sell crushing testimony, secrets of state. He it was who conceived the idea of studying the man in a room entirely lined with mirrors. . . . I declare simply that Major du Paty de Clam, designated as prosecuting officer, is the one who is first and most of all guilty of the fearful miscarriage of justice.

The "*bordereau*" had been for some time previously in the hands of the late Colonel Sandherr, head of the Secret Service. "Leaks" had been discovered, papers had disappeared, as they still do, today; when a perfectly arbitrary guess suggested that the author of the document could only be an artillery-officer, attached to the General Staff; manifestly a double error, which reveals in what a superficial manner the *bordereau* had been studied, for a reasonable examination shows that it could only have emanated from a line officer.

A search was made then; handwritings were examined, at home; it was all a family affair; a traitor was to be found right under their noses, and to be expelled. . . And Major du Paty de Clam enters as the first suspicion falls on Dreyfus. Henceforth it is he who conceives, creates Dreyfus; the affair becomes his affair; he extends himself to confound the traitor, to precipitate him into complete confessions. There is also the Minister of War, General Mercier, at work, whose intellect seems but mediocre; there is also the chief-of-staff, General Boisdeffre, who seems to yield to his clerical passions; and there is the under-chief of the General-Staff, General Gonse, whose conscience adjusts itself readily to many things. But at bottom, there is at first no one so busily involved as Major du Paty de Clam, who leads them all, who hypnotizes them, for he is also interested in spiritism, occultism, he talks with spirits. The experiments to which he had the unfortunate Dreyfus submitted, the traps he laid, seem incredible; the mad investigations, the monstrous hoax, a whole harrowing dementia.

Ah, that first affair is a nightmare for whoever knows it in its true details! . . . And thus the charges were drawn up, as in some tale of the 15th Century, in an atmosphere of mystery, brutal tricks, expedients, all based on a single, inane accusation, that of having written the idiotic "*bordereau*," for the famous secrets delivered were found to be almost valueless. And, I insist, the core of the problem is here: it is from here on

that the real crime issues, the shocking denial of justice which renders all France sick. I could wish to have everyone visualize how the judicial error was made possible, how it was born in the machinations of Major du Paty de Clam, how Generals Mercier, Boisdeffre, and Gonse permitted themselves to be taken in, entangling themselves little by little in the error which not long after they deem it necessary to impose upon us as the Holy Truth itself, a truth which is beyond all question and all discussion! At the outset their part had involved nothing more than negligence and silliness. At the most it had been a yielding to the religious prejudices of their circles, and to the bigotry of their party-spirit. They suffered the error to be made.

But here is Dreyfus before the court-martial. The most rigorous secrecy is preserved. A traitor might have opened the frontier to the enemy and led the German emperor clear to the Nôtre Dame cathedral and no more extreme measures of silence and mystery would have been taken. The nation is horror-stricken, the most terrible details are whispered of monstrous treasons that make all history cry out; obviously, the whole nation bows to the court. No punishment is severe enough for the criminal; the country will applaud the public degradation, she will want the guilty man to stay eternally on his rock of infamy, devoured by remorse. Is there any truth in those whispered unmentionable things, capable of setting all Europe aflame, that they must needs be buried in the deep secrecy of star-chamber proceedings? No. Behind those doors there were only romantic and insane notions, and the imaginings of a Major du Paty de Clam. All these efforts were merely to hide the most ridiculous and bizarre of serial romances. To be assured of that one has only to study carefully the bill of indictment read before the court-martial.

Ah! the inanity of that accusation! That a man could have been condemned on such a charge is a prodigy of iniquity. I challenge honest people to read it and not be overcome with indignation, and not cry out their revulsion at the superhuman expiation of the man on Devil's Island.

Dreyfus, it is shown, knows several languages: crime; he works hard: crime; no compromising papers are found in his home; crime; he goes occasionally to the country of his origin: crime; he endeavours to learn everything: crime; he is not easily worried: crime; he is worried: crime. And the simplicity of all these concoctions, pompous assertions in a vacuum! We were told of fourteen charges in the accusation; in the end we find only one, that of the "*bordereau*"; and we learn even, that the experts were not unanimous on this, that one of them, M. Gobert, was roughly handled for not having come to the desired conclusion. . . . It is a family trial, one is completely among friends, and it must be remembered, finally, that the General Staff made the trial, judged it, and has just merely re-affirmed its judgment.

And so there remained nothing but the "*bordereau*" which was attributed (not unanimously) to Dreyfus. It is said that in the council chamber, the judges were naturally in favor of acquittal. And therefore, to justify the condemnation we may understand the desperate obstinacy with which they maintained the existence of a secret paper (emanating from a foreign office), something overwhelming, impossible ever to reveal, which legitimizes everything done, before which, in short, we must bow as we do to the almighty and unknowable God!

And this, I deny! I deny that paper! I deny it with all my power! One exists, yes. A ridiculous paper, something in which there is mention of a little woman, and wherein a certain D...(?) is spoken of as too extortionate; some cuckold doubtless wailing that he is not paid well enough for the use of his wife. But a paper involving the defense of the nation, that could not be produced without war being declared tomorrow —no, no! it is a lie. And it is the more odious and sardonic that they may lie with impunity and beyond the reach of argument. They muster all France, they hide behind her legitimate emotion, they shut up mouths by disturbing hearts, by perverting the mind. I know of no greater civic crime.

Here then, Mr. President, are the facts that explain how a judicial error could have been committed; and the moral proofs, the prosperous situation of Dreyfus, the absence of motives, his continual cry of innocence, combine to show him a victim of the extraordinary imaginings of Major du Paty de Clam, and of the clerical milieu in which he found himself, of the whole persecution, in short, of "the dirty Jews" that dishonors our time.

And now we arrive at the Esterhazy affair.

I shall not make an exposition of the doubts, then the certainty of M. Scheurer-Kestner. But while he was making researches for his part, grave incidents were taking place within the General Staff itself. Colonel Sandherr had died, and Lieutenant-Colonel Picquart had succeeded him as chief of the Secret Service. It was in this function that the latter found one day a little despatch addressed to Major Esterhazy by the agents of a foreign power. His duty was to open an investigation. It is clear that he never acted against the wishes of his superiors. He reported his findings to General Gonse, then General Billot, then Minister of War. These researches lasted from May to September, 1896, and what must be cried out loud to all is that General Gonse was convinced of the guilt of Esterhazy, that General Billot and General Boisdeffre never doubted that the "*bordereau*" was the work of Esterhazy; the inquest of Picquart's had made that conclusion inevitable. But the emotion was extraordinary, for the condemnation of Esterhazy involved fatedly the revision of the Dreyfus verdict and it was this of all things that the General Staff wished to avoid at all cost.

There must have been, then, a psychological moment steeped in anguish for them. Observe that General Billot, new Minister of War, was as yet in no way compromised in the previous affair. His hands were clean; he could have established the truth. He dared not; in terror no doubt of public opinion, certainly also in fear of abandoning the whole General Staff, Boisdeffre, Gonse and the others, not to mention numerous subordinates involved. And so there was nothing but a moment of struggle between his conscience and what he felt to be the army's interests. When that moment had passed, it was already too late. He had involved himself, he was compromised. And since then his responsibility has only grown; he has taken upon his own account the crimes of others; he is more guilty than they for he was in a position to render justice, and he has done nothing. Do you understand that! Here it is a year since Generals Billot, Boisdeffre and Gonse know that Dreyfus is innocent and they keep the fearful thing to themselves! And those men sleep, and they have wives and children they love!

Colonel Picquart had done his duty as an honest man. In the name of justice he argued, he pleaded, he indicated how impolitic were their delays, in the face of the terrible storm that was gathering and would break with dreadful force when the truth were known. . . . No! The crime had been committed, the General Staff could no longer acknowledge its crime. And Colonel Picquart was sent upon a "mission"; he was ordered to go farther and farther away in Africa, . . . and they would honor his courage some day by entrusting him with a service that would surely have been his death, and yet he was not in disgrace; General Gonse maintained friendly correspondence with him. But there are secrets which one does ill to discover.

At Paris, Truth was on the march, indefatigable, unconquerable. It s known in what manner the awaited storm broke. M. Mathieu Dreyfus denounced Major Esterhazy as the true author of the "*bordereau*" at the same moment that M. Scheurer-Kestner was about to place in the hands of the Keeper of the Seals, a demand for the revision of the Dreyfus Trial. And it is at this point, for the first time that Major Esterhazy appears. Witnesses show him maddened at first, prone to suicide or flight. Then suddenly, he gambles on a daring front, he amazes all Paris by the violence of his gestures and attitudes. Help had come to him; he had received an anonymous letter warning him of the foul projects of his enemies—a mysterious veiled woman had even taken the trouble to visit him at night and return a paper stolen from the General Staff, which was to save him. And I cannot avoid perceiving in all these shifts the hand of Colonel du Paty de Clam, revealing as they do the qualities of his fertile imagination. His masterpiece, the established guilt of Dreyfus, was in danger, and he naturally desired to defend his achievement. Revision

of the trial—but that would have meant the utter ruin of an extravagant tragic serial romance, whose horrible dénouement takes place in Devil's Island! . . . From now on, a duel is fought between Col. Picquart and Colonel du Paty de Clam, the one with frank, open face, the other masked. We shall find them both soon before the bar of civil justice. But at bottom, remember, it is always the General Staff defending itself, refusing to avow a crime whose consequences pile up from hour to hour.

Who, people asked in amazement, could be the defenders of Major Esterhazy? There is first, Colonel du Paty de Clam; there is next, General Boisdeffre, General Gonse, General Billot himself, all compelled now to have the Major acquitted, since they cannot permit the innocence of Dreyfus to be recognized without having the whole war department demolished by the public wrath. And the beautiful result of this preposterous situation is that the man who is supremely honest, who alone of all men, has done his duty, is to be the victim, is to be subjected to derision and punishment.

O justice, what horrible despair strikes the heart! They say even that he was the forger, that he fabricated the despatch in order to betray Esterhazy! But, good Lord, why? To what end? Is he also paid by the Jews? . . . Ah, we witness the infamous spectacle of men weighed down with debts and crimes being proclaimed to all the world as innocent and virtuous, while the very soul of honor, a man without a stain, is dragged in the mire! When a country, when a civilization has come to this, it must fall apart in decay.

This then, Mr. President, is the Esterhazy affair: a guilty man who had to be exculpated for "reasons of state." For two months past we have been forced to look at this fine spectacle, hour by hour. . . . And we have seen General Pellieux, then Major Ravary conduct a dishonorable investigation from which scoundrels emerge purified and honest men besmirched. And then, at length, they convoked the court-martial. . . .

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How could any one expect a court-martial to undo what a previous court-martial had done?

I do not even refer to the decision of the judges. Is not the ruling idea of discipline in the very blood of these soldiers strong enough to weaken their power of judgment? And when the Minister-of-War himself had asserted amid the acclamations of the two houses of parliament the irrevocability of the case to be judged, could you expect a court-martial to oppose a formal denial! They made their decision as they would have gone into battle, heads down, without reasoning. The fixed idea that they brought to the court-martial was clearly this: "Dreyfus was condemned by a court-martial; he is, therefore, guilty; we, a court-martial canno

declare him innocent. Now we know, moreover, that to recognize the guilt of Esterhazy would be to proclaim the innocence of Dreyfus." Nothing could enable them to get out of that charmed circle.

They have rendered an unjust verdict, one that will forever weigh upon our court-martials, and which from now on will cast the blot of suspicion upon all the decisions of military courts. The first court-martial might have been stupid, the second was necessarily criminal. Its excuse, I repeat is that the supreme chief had spoken, declaring the matter judged unimpeachable—holy and superior to men and reason, something that inferiors could not dare to question. They speak to us of the honor of the army, they want us to respect, to love it. Yes, by all means yes—that army which would rise at the first menace to defend French soil, which is in fact the whole people, and for which we have nothing but tenderness and reverence. But there is no question of such an army, whose dignity we justly desire in our longing for justice. It is a question of the sword, the master that we shall probably have forced upon us tomorrow. And as for kissing the hilt of the sword, piously—great God, no!

Dreyfus cannot be vindicated unless the whole General Staff is indicted. And the war-office through every possible expedient, through campaigns in the press, through pressure, influence, has sought to screen Esterhazy, in order to demolish Dreyfus once more. What a cleaning up the republican government must institute in that house of Jesuits, as General Billot himself called it. Where is there the truly powerful ministry, imbued with a just and wise patriotism, that would dare reform everything and restore everything? And how many citizens there are who, fearing an imminent war, tremble with alarm, knowing to whom supreme command of the national defense is entrusted! What a nest of low intrigue, corruption and dissipation that sacred precinct has become, where the fate of the nation is to be decided. Ah, what abominable measures have been resorted to in this affair of folly and stupidity, smacking of low police practice, of unbridled nightmares, of Spanish inquisition—all for the sweet pleasure of a few uniformed and accoutred personages who grind their heel into the nation, who hurl back into its throat the cry for truth and justice, under the lying guise of "reasons of state."

And it is still a greater crime to have used the yellow press, to have permitted all the rascals of Paris to come to their aid, so that now we have the rascals triumphing insolently in the defeat of right and honesty. And it is again a crime for them to accuse those who desire France, generous, liberal, at the head of free and just nations, of plotting her downfall. It is a crime to misdirect public opinion and to pervert it until it becomes delirious. It is a crime to poison small and simple minds, to arouse the passions of intolerance and reaction through the odium of that miserable anti-semitism of which great and liberal France with her rights of man,

will expire if she is not soon cured. It is a crime to exploit patriotism for motives of hatred, and it is a crime, finally, to make of the sword the modern god when all human science is at work to bring about a future of truth and justice.

How pitiful that this truth, this justice we have so passionately desired, seems now more mutilated, punished, cast off than ever before!

I know what desolation there is in the heart of M. Scheurer-Kestner, and I firmly believe that he will deeply regret some day, not having acted in a more direct and revolutionary manner during his interpellation in the Senate, for not having opened up the whole business, flung down the gauntlet irrevocably. He thought that the truth itself would suffice; and what was the use of overturning everything? And it is for that serene faith that he is now being so cruelly tormented. And likewise for Colonel Picquart who through a sentiment of discipline and honor has been unwilling to publish the letters of General Gonse, while his superiors cover him with slime, and direct a trial of him in the most incredible and outrageous manner. These are two of the victims, two brave, open-hearted men who waited for God to act while the devil was frightfully busy.

Such then, Mr. President, is the simple truth. It is the fearful truth. It will persist as a great stain upon your administration. I suspect that you have no power in this matter, that you are the prisoner of the Constitution and of your situation. You have, none the less, your duty as a man, on which you will doubtless reflect and which you will fulfill. In any event, I do not despair in the least of ultimate triumph. I repeat with more intense conviction: the truth is on the march and nothing will stop her! It is only today that this affair has begun, since it is only now that sides have definitely been taken: on the one hand, the culprits who want no light at all on the business; on the other, lovers of justice who would lay down their lives for it. I have said elsewhere and I say again, when the truth is buried underground, it grows, it chokes, it gathers such an explosive force that on the day when it bursts out, it blows everything up with it. We shall soon see whether we have not laid the mines for a most far-reaching disaster of the near future.

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But this letter is long, Mr. President, and it is time to conclude.

I ACCUSE COLONEL DU PATY DE CLAM of having been the diabolical agent of the judicial error, unconsciously, I prefer to believe, and of having continued to defend his deadly work during the past three years through the most absurd and revolting machinations.

I ACCUSE GENERAL MERCIER of having made himself an accomplice in one of the greatest crimes of history, probably through weak-mindedness.

I ACCUSE GENERAL BILLOT of having had in his hands the decisive proofs

of the innocence of Dreyfus and of having concealed them, and of having rendered himself guilty of the crime of lèse humanity and lèse justice, out of political motives and to save the face of the General Staff.

I ACCUSE GENERAL BOISDEFFRE AND GENERAL GONSE of being accomplices in the same crime, the former no doubt through religious prejudice, the latter out of esprit de corps.

I ACCUSE GENERAL DE PELLIEUX AND MAJOR RAVARY of having made a scoundrelly inquest, I mean an inquest of the most monstrous partiality, the complete report of which composes for us an imperishable monument of naïve effrontery.

I ACCUSE THE THREE HANDWRITING EXPERTS, MM. Belhomme, Varinard and Couard of having made lying and fraudulent reports, unless a medical examination will certify them to be deficient of sight and judgment.

I ACCUSE THE WAR-OFFICE of having led a vile campaign in the press, particularly in *l'Eclair* and in *l'Echo de Paris* in order to misdirect public opinion and cover up its sins.

I ACCUSE, LASTLY, THE FIRST COURT-MARTIAL of having violated all human right in condemning a prisoner on testimony kept secret from him, and I ACCUSE THE SECOND COURT-MARTIAL of having covered up this illegality by order, committing in turn the judicial crime of acquitting a guilty man with full knowledge of his guilt.

In making these accusations I am aware that I render myself liable to articles 30 and 31 of Libel Laws of July 29, 1881, which punish acts of defamation. I expose myself voluntarily.

As to the men I accuse, I do not know them, I have never seen them, I feel neither resentment nor hatred against them. For me they are only entities, emblems of social malfeasance. The action I take here is simply a revolutionary step designed to hasten the explosion of truth and justice.

I have one passion only, for light, in the name of humanity which has borne so much and has a right to happiness. My burning protest is only the cry of my soul. Let them dare then to carry me to the court of appeals, and let there be an inquest in the full light of the day!

I am waiting.

Mr. President, I beg you to accept the assurances of my deepest respect.

For many thousands of people, the name of Zola had been two musical notes of a song of hate. Now, in this hour when the arts of hatred and insurrection were being cultivated exceptionally, the burden of rage and execration vaguely directed at the resident of Devil's Island was shifted voluntarily and enthusiastically to the author of the *Rougon-Macquart*.

To be hated was neither a novel nor a disagreeable experi-

ence for Emile Zola. But there are degrees. It seemed at times as if this whole disquieted people arose and with one voice demanded his blood. He had underestimated, in the *élan* of his public action the spread of this virus in his people. It was the *crucifixion* of citizen Zola they called for.

Mobs paraded the streets, manifesting. Zola was burnt in effigy and hurled into the Seine. The *Libre Parole* called fearlessly for the sacking of his house, for his assassination. The rest of the press demanded variously his trial, his incarceration, his execution. He had "insulted the army"—so he had—the government the whole nation.

The constant turmoil which had gripped Paris for two months was not comparable to the vast uproar that arose now. A few days and there were bloody uprisings in Algiers, where anti-semitism had made brilliant progress under skilled leaders, and Jews were killed, their shops ruined. There was sacking of Jewish quarters in many towns throughout France. There was indescribable disorder in the House of Deputies (January 14), Jaurès being the center of the storm. And soon retribution, dreadful in its scope was under way; the Ministry was moving to strike the insurgent Zola and his "accomplices."

Was this what Zola had desired? Or had he counted upon whipping up the whole public behind him? Would he have taken such a dangerous measure both for the cause of "truth and justice" and for himself, had he gauged the fury of the storm he would evoke? His whole life was cast into the balance; the peace and privacy of his home invaded by war. Would he have knowingly, voluntarily, subjected himself to imprisonment, to unknown punishment, to definite financial disaster? For on the morrow of *J'accuse* all his works were banned by the great public . . .

But the action had been inevitable. All avenues of justice had been closed. It had been a question of submitting to the existence not only of one abominable social crime, but a succession

of them, a possible reign of darkness. That this could go on and on, he would not believe. He had thrown his own might against the growing bigotry and madness that was engulfing the Republic, against the menace of the Military and Clerical State. He had, under the first splendid impulse, written his Letter to the President . . .

There had been accumulated a whole life-time debt of public action, of adventure, as in the solitude of his study, he lived only into his volumes. The times had become unbearable. All his life he had been pursuing certainties, truth: now he had "cried them out loud," alone. The sense of oppression was gone. He was now very calm. He was *free.*

Those who saw Zola in the days that followed *J'accuse* were astonished. "Oh! his beard had nothing of the prophet; no *tremolos* of frenzy agitated him!" wrote the feminist Sévérine. "He was not violent, he was not filled with hate . . . On the contrary, he was simplicity and serenity itself. He had accomplished what he believed to be his duty . . . He had then, what always accompanies such certitude, the peace of his conscience. And without solemnity; there was a smiling indulgent warmth, barely tinted with melancholy."

Henceforth *everything* of Zola was touched with grandeur. He was complete, he was simple; he was ready for all sacrifices. When the "cause" seemed to demand of him the obliteration of himself, the apparent sacrifice of his own honor, he was willing! The whole extraordinary spectacle of the greater Dreyfus affair suggests a last splendid burst of romanticism for the nineteenth century.

If certain of his friends abandoned him now, if one—was it Céard—could have said, "He is momentarily gone mad. He is furious at the whole world . . ." many new ones flocked to him. In a few days, Marcel Proust and a few other young students had gathered 3,000 signatures to a petition in favor of Zola. It was

now that scientists, men of letters, like Duclaux, Anatole France, Octave Mirbeau, the family Berthelot, Paul Meyer, Séailles, gave their adherence. It was now that collectivist statesmen like Jaurès and Trarieux espoused the dangerous cause openly. It was a broader stage. It was a duel now between a reactionary government and a faction embracing the most eminent thinkers, that harked back to the first Revolution, to Voltaire, to the liberal ideas of the Encyclopedia.

These men were soon dubbed by a strange term of opprobrium, "the intellectuals." How perfect! For in the other camp, it could at least be said, there were few "intellectuals." One thinks only of the Nietzchean and nationalistic Maurice Barrès, who dubbed the Zolaïsts also, "demi-intellectuals"—and of François Coppée, in his dotage, under the terrifying admonitions of priests from whom he now was seeking absolution, marching at the head of the black bands.

During the ominous days that followed, when the air was filled with sinister rumors of a coup d'état and a St. Bartholomew's massacre, and Zola, fatigued and harassed by the clamor outside his window and the danger of being "lynched" had to sleep at the home of friends, word came now that the Government was about to prosecute him for libel.

Trial! cried the Dreyfusards. Trial! cried the chauvinists.

"We were like the weary soldiers of an army," records Reinach, "who took heart at this new prospect and hastened again to battle."

"Trial?" exclaimed Esterhazy bitterly. He maintained that it was a terrible mistake to try Zola. "In a country with real traditions," he added, "a criminal like Zola would now have been in the dungeons of some fortress!"

The two forces marched toward the trial. It was a week later, on January 20th, that the citation reached Zola, embracing only fifteen lines of his manifesto, those dealing with the Court-Martial's "acquittal of Esterhazy by order." All the rest of his charges

ould be ignored, in order to keep out the Dreyfus Affair, to rule it "things judged." These were the usual tactics; yet a cry of dignation went up from the growing army of "truth and justice." oth Emile Zola and Perrenx, manager of the *Aurore* had been ted.

The attorneys selected for Zola were Maître Fernand Labori nd Maître Albert Clemenceau, the gifted brother of "the Tiger." eorges Clemenceau, himself, would act as attorney for the *urore.*

Maître Labori, however, became the romantic figure of the cessively "Shakespearean drama" that was to unroll at the ourt of Assizes, in the *Palais de Justice* of Paris. Labori, born Rheims, of Alsatian stock, was young, with "a tall commanding gure, sunny-haired, a warm and penetrating voice." Talented, credibly courageous, employing unbounded energy, he believed nplacably in Revision, and according to the lofty traditions of e French bar with respect to political trials, derived only glory nd little gain from the fight. It was planned to call some two hunred witnesses, all the General Staff, the whole Cabinet, and en foreign Ambassadors.

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The government, it appears, was very pained by this furious tack, right before elections. It was not only that Zola had been ctless; he had apprehended correctly the internal maladies it ffered from, the bad consciences. With far less information an they supposed he had, his portrayal of the whole affair had en astonishingly accurate, save for one instance: the diabolical le he attributed to Du Paty de Clam belonged to another officer, olonel Henry. The Ministry of Méline and de Mun moved toward e trial, it is said, with a "dead heart."

February 7, 1898: An immense crowd, *tout Paris* of the emières, attends the opening day of the Zola trial. There are

massed thousands on the Place Dauphine outside the Palace a febrile agitation everywhere: the patriots of the café-concert, the anti-semites, professional thugs, hoot and bellow at all the real or pretended "enemies of the army," acclaim every uniform that passes. Esterhazy receives an ovation; although ostracized by his fellow officers, he has had to insist threateningly upon being saluted in public. Zola, the report goes, has received 30,000 letters of commendation or sympathy from all parts of the world. There is incessant brawling in the corridors and in the streets. The audience in the court-room has been "planted" for the most part by the military.

"The novelist surrounded by his band of friends," says the *Echo de Paris* (anti-Dreyfus), "enters the hall quietly. He is nervous but gay. From time to time with a dry gesture, he adjusts his lorgnon, or his cream-colored vest, which tends to rise up continually. . . ." For the most part he leans forward, with his chin on his cane. Fasquelle, junior partner of Charpentier, the musician Bruneau, Desmoulins, Labori, the huge Claude Monet, the three Clemenceau brothers are his guard. Some of them, it is said, carry arms. (The public whispers that Zola has been given 2,000,000 francs!)

One may observe also, the face of Georges Clemenceau, lined and passionate, like that of a Mogul. Labori is a blond profile. There is Mathieu Dreyfus, and there is Madame Lucie Dreyfus in black, the widow of a living-dead man. There are the famous "intellectuals," there is Drumont with his face of an old-clothes peddler, Déroulède, Bertillon.

The judge, a M. Delagorgue, fat, complacent, red-faced, announces that the debate will be restricted entirely to the specific complaint of the Second Court-Martial, accused of "acquitting Esterhazy by order." There was to be no discussion of "things judged."

There will be then, another strangling of the Affair! But no this judge is made of the sheerest fantasy. When the testimony

s dangerously near home, he will thump with his gavel and cry: "The question will not be put!" This cry is destined to become legendary, the *leit-motif* of the trial, falling with the "mechanical absolutism of a piston-rod," and revealing nicely the tacit accord between the Court and the General Staff.

The preliminaries: reading of the accusations, the list of witnesses. It seems that the Premier will not permit General Billot to testify; General Billot will not permit General Mercier; General Mercier will not permit X to appear; nor X, Y, ad infinitum. The jury is composed entirely of small tradespeople. Their names and addresses have been published in the violent newspapers.

As to the confinement, the *suppression* of the real issue, Labori has been thundering in his sonorous, unvanquishable voice:

"You are trying to stop a raging flood!"

Lucie Dreyfus is on the stand. Zola had dreamed this scene. But before she can open her lips, under her veil, the judge has issued the first of his interdictions: "The question will not be put!"

Zola choking with indignation leaps to his feet:

"I demand the right accorded to murderers and thieves, to call witnesses, to have them heard."

The judge informs him that it is not his place to speak: the law, etc.

"I do not know your law! . . . I don't want to know it!" cries Zola beside himself.

A great roar rises from the public, and (*Echo de Paris*), "one sees peaceable, grave, decorated, intelligent, notable citizens, lifting their fists toward this man, and shouting with one voice:

" 'Down with Zola!' "

There are a few friendly cries.

Zola struggles to make himself heard above the din: "I must speak! I must reply! . . ." The words choke. "Every day I am slandered, rolled in the mire."

"We shall know how to make you respect the law!" says the Court.

"I did not mean to place myself above the law. I meant . . ." his voice is drowned; "that to use only fifteen lines of what I said, in order to inculpate me is beneath justice. I desired to place myself above such hypocritical procedure intended to shut my mouth. . . ." He subsides.

The censorship wavers. When a great General like Mercier, or Pellieux, who conducts the Army's case, or a Jaurès, or a Trarieux testifies, the bounds imposed are exceeded, everything past and present is dragged in, as the Judge and the public grow momentarily fascinated. . . . The "light" grows.

After six or seven hours of wearing debate, there is the sortie. On the first day, there are only a few baying hounds as the carriage of Zola quits the courtyard. But on the second, nerves have been more highly keyed. The testimony of Scheurer-Kestner (who is not permitted to read the Gonse-Picquart letters, but publishes them), of Leblois, the confidant of Picquart, has aroused Drumont, who gives the signal to rush the "enemies of France" for "the calm of yesterday was scandalous!" One sees fighting in the corridors; the palace is invaded by a familiar mob. There is a mad shoving and scrambling, as this solid mass directs itself toward Zola and his body-guard.

There is an unforgettable tableau of Zola, pale, terrified, facing a sea of enflamed, howling faces from the top of the great steps. He is at the mercy of the mob, and he sees its true visage for the first time. He is near being torn to pieces, massacred; there are no police. In time, his friends push him back into the building and drive him toward a cloak-room. There is a call for guards. Outside on the steps a young man is being beaten into unconsciousness. He cried, "*Vive Zola!*" People are being led to the police station. What have they done? They cried: "Long live the Republic!"

Suddenly through another door, Zola surrounded by his half-dozen companions, the towering Labori, Desmoulins, Bruneau, the three Clemenceaus, drives down the steps in a determined phalanx.

"DOWN WITH ZOLA! . . ."

"Pale, awkward, myopic, a little disheveled, but his chin firmly set, he moves toward the gate. The mob blocks him everywhere across the vast plaza." The small band thrusts through it, sinks into it, disappears. All one can see is the furious movement of its furrow through the thousands, down the broad steps. (One thinks of Matho, in the last chapter of *Salâmmbo* descending a stairway like this under the blows of the populace.) One trembles less for him, than for the honor of this country. The gray evening falls. There is a carriage, surrounded by policemen. The crowd turns whirling toward it, as Zola and his body-guard reach it. "A moment more and carriage and occupant would be in pieces!" The horses are whipped up, and the carriage leaves at a tremendous gallop, pursued by a hundred hoodlums crying, "Death to Zola! Into the river with him! . . ." Emile Zola, weary and in pain, is sitting there, his back drooping, his face drawn, his eyes sick.

February 9th, 1898: The trial verges from Shakespearean tragedy to farce. Heroes and clowns. Labori sweats blood; the man is a dynamo. He answers every challenge; his sonorous voice dominates, admonishes. Tirelessly, with a sustained thunder that never descends for a moment he clings to every vestige of Law that is not forcibly torn from him.

The Generals testify: here is Lieutenant-General Le Mouton de Boisdeffre, in full regalia, his sword clanking. "I swear . . . my word of honor as a soldier . . . that Dreyfus was legally and justly condemned." And nothing more tangible. He envelops himself in his "professional secret." This is the man who studied for many years at the court of the Czar—anti-semitism?

A secret-service officer testifies that Picquart forged papers in order to inculpate the innocent Esterhazy! And he is permitted to speak. The witnesses defile. One of the original judges of Dreyfus is called. His face is anguished with torments of conscience. He is about to break down; the Court dismisses him hurriedly with the familiar formula. It was a close call . . . The battle

f the lawyers becomes a sputtering fire. Zola muses, his chin on is cane, bored now.

There is a diversion when Colonel the Marquis du Paty de lam stalks into the hall. Was this the man they turned Dreyfus ver to? One-two-one-two, wheel-stop, like a wooden soldier; his ace is unbending in the grimace of the monocle. This nervous, bsessed sickly "case," this man was Zola's "diabolical instrument"? His lips tell nothing. He marches off. "They ought to call im back. *He was too funny!*"

There is drama again, when Colonel Henry appears. He is ne successor of the buried Sandherr, the defender of the "dark abinet" and its secrets. This peasant with his vast, placid red ace, his stout frame cloaked like a monk's, mentions Picquart's ame with an accent of menace. There is good and evil in his reard; the eternal craft of the French peasant. In the stress of ater events, many recalled the dead luster of his eyes . . .

The Zola trial by the force of events, and despite the perpetual nterdictions of the Court—"The question will not be put!"—ecomes with every passing day a re-edition of the Dreyfus trial. Evidence rejected is published the following morning in the newsapers. The world applauds in Zola the *spirit of initiative;* whatver is to become of him, condemned, impoverished, dishonored ublicly, his followers throughout the civilized world feel a nounting veneration. "Dreyfus has disappeared behind the figure f Zola," it is observed, and Zola has become a symbol, hated nd loved. He is passive now, guarding himself from all outursts. Under the strain of hourly dangers, applause and persecution, his human traits are aggrandized to measure the heroic ôle.

February 11th, 1898: There is pride. Under the insults of General Pellieux, conducting the Army's case, Zola revolts again:

"Each one serves his country in his own way, whether by the word or the pen! General Pellieux has no doubt won great vic-

tories: (thinking surely of 1870!) I have won mine! Through my works French thought has been carried to the four corners of the world. Posterity will chose between the name of Pellieux and Emile Zola."

This was being hard.

Lieutenant-Colonel Picquart testifies. He is truly the most satisfying of heroes! His appearance of excessive youth belies his forty-three years, and his twenty-five years of meritorious service. His features are fine, his gestures rare, his words reasoning, gravely chosen. One feels the marked contrast with his fellow-officers: meditative, a little melancholy. . . . alas, "intellectual." One is aware of the fearful cost of his dissent, the extraordinary character of the persecution he has undergone, and of the division in his nature. He has nothing but his career of a soldier; the ruins of this, it is understood, are suspended over his head by General Billot, in measure with his testimony at this trial.

At first in guarded words, for he had lamented the forbidden revelations of Leblois, he confines himself to repelling with ease, with an informed grasp, the sordid accusations of himself. The whole trial hangs upon him; there is a *malaise* throughout the courtroom. It is dissipated, for he has confined his words, he has clung to his ingrained faith in his superior officers; his lips are sealed!

February 12, 1898: The little Picquart had told had enraged the military. With the habitual folly of the criminal, Henry goads his victim. There is the premeditated shock. In a conflict of testimony, he cries:

"And I maintain all that I have said, and I add that Colonel Picquart lies!"

Picquart's arm rises to strike him, and then with a prodigious effort drops back.

"You have no right to say that!"

And suddenly resistance in him bursts like a dam. He faces jury, anguished, at bay, turning in full revolt upon his mentors:

"I demand the right to explain myself to the jury." And ore passionately, "Gentlemen of the jury, you have seen how en like Colonel Henry, Gribelin, Lauth, have made the most ious accusations of me without proofs! Ah! gentlemen of the ry! If you but knew why all this is done. You will understand hen you realize that the fabricators of the preceding affair (Drey-s) which is bound up with the Esterhazy affair, believing them-lves in the right, and having inherited the whole case from the e Colonel Sandherr, as involving the honor of the Secret Service ureau, continue to defend this judgment in every way.

"I thought, when I was at the head of the Secret Service that ere was a better way of serving a cause than to cling blindly an error.

"And so I have been outraged for a long time, months, years, the paid press: I have been heaped with calumny and insult. have existed in a situation most horrible for a loyal officer; for saw my honor attacked without being able to defend myself. , you can never know the intrigues, the plots to disgrace . . . .

"And tomorrow, perhaps, I shall be driven from the army ich I have loved, and to which I have given twenty-five years my life. But that did not stop me, in my desire to render a eater service by seeking the truth. . . ." He stops, almost aghast. rtually the whole story burst from him: his discoveries, the istance of his associates, the machinations to send him away, silence him. . . . Only he has not yet spoken of the hollow ockery of the "secret portfolio."

One of his chiefs attempts to calm the troubled waters. It is nse, who in speaking regretfully of Picquart, says jesuitically, e is capable of becoming a good officer again. . . ." Picquart restrained again. But Henry, in fear that he is being aban-

doned, in madness perhaps, thrusts the whole cause toward th brink of the abyss.

They want light? . . . *Allons-y*, then! Come on! Let's give i to them. His phrase becomes immortal. He speaks of the "secre portfolio," the *absolute proofs* of intercourse with the enem upon which Dreyfus was really convicted, abandoning then, th refuted *bordereau!*

Labori is upon him with the bound of a panther. The proofs then! The proofs!

Pellieux, who had locked horns unfortunately with Zola answers proudly, crushingly, he believes. It is the *coup de massue* the finishing stroke—for the war-council. He cites from memory *forgery* of Colonel Henry,* long held in reserve! He sends fo Lieutenant-General Boisdeffre to substantiate him. There i tumult; bedlam. The court is adjourned. The rioting exceeds every thing past. The cards are on the table, for all eyes.

When General Boisdeffre testifies the next morning; it is wit a dead heart. In the fatigue and the emotion of the moment, th prosecution had destroyed itself. The German Ambassador, know ing of this false note had declared that the making public of palpable forgery, *would be deemed an affront upon a peacefu nation, a casus belli.* So that Boisdeffre, trembling with emotion spoke no more of it, and appealed emotionally again to the jury to believe that "upon his honor," as the military chief of France Dreyfus was guilty! The coercion of the jury becomes later a fin art, in the want of evidence. General Boisdeffre had instructe them, exceeding all legal limits, that they had only to choos between the army corps and the Dreyfusards! He and the General would all resign in case of a verdict favorable to the accused!

The *dénouement* begins now. Spectacular scenes succeed them selves. There is low comedy when the expert, Bertillon, reveals hi idiocy pitifully. There is brilliant repartee, when Maître Dem

* Panizzardi to Schwarzkoppen: ". . . Say nothing about the relations w have had with that Jew."

nges, the old attorney of Dreyfus, in 1894, sneaks through his estimony under the nose of the Judge. There is tragi-comedy hen Esterhazy finally appears. His desperation is known, and is fellow-officers in panic search him for fire-arms before he nters the court; they make him vow to keep his wild jaws shut.

Pointing to Emile Zola he says swaggeringly:

"As for those people, I have no reply to make to them!"

That was all. Maître Albert Clemenceau asks him sixty questions, and extracts not a word! He reads the defaming letters; is topped. Even the corps can barely stomach Esterhazy's handhake. This flawless villain is doomed, and the rest of his life s to be divided between blackmail and vengeful revelation. . . .

The "intellectuals" testify for Zola and rehearse the whole ffair.

Anatole France appears in the strange rôle of a follower of Zola!

"It was a beautiful and courageous act," he says.

Jean Jaurès, towering, leonine, issues a torrent of words, pacng up and down, gesticulating, shaking with passion. No one can top him.

And Zola, "the more the storm rose in violence, the more calm e became. The cries of death! greeted him at each sortie and ollowed him to his home, but troubled neither his calm courage, or that of his wife. . . . His pity rose for the deceived masses, or this great people gone mad. He had imposed upon himself determination not to intervene in the debate, to listen impasively. As the legal tortuousness increased, despair rose in im . . ."

Before the prosecuting attorney General Pellieux now made the lea for the War-Council. It was in keeping with the extraordinary ampaign of terrorization that had been going on in the press, ith the public adulation of Esterhazy.

General Pellieux is drunken with the praise that his newly iscovered powers of oratory have evoked in the friendly press.

In the shadow of catastrophe, he takes command boldly, over the heads of his superiors, wrapping himself in his toga, his inward eye visioning a healing *stroke of state.* He is permitted to address the jury directly, this loyal little jury which has been elbowed and accosted in a thousand ways, whose names and addresses have been broadcast, upon whose doors the white cross has been drawn! And he speaks memorable words:

"What do you wish this army to become on the day of danger, *nearer than you believe!* What do you expect for those miserable soldiers who will be led into battle by leaders who *will have been dishonored* before them? It is to slaughter, to butchery, that *your sons* will be led then, gentlemen of the jury. And then Monsieur Zola will have won a new victory! He will have written another *Débâcle.* He will spread the French language through the universe, throughout a Europe, *from which France will have been blotted out!*"

It was these little tradespeople who would suffer the holocaust that was promised if Zola was acquitted.

February 21, 1898: The nation, the world outside is hoarse with this trial in which it had gone palpitating through all the gamut, all the cadenzas, fled before all the Valkyries for fourteen days.

The Prosecuting Attorney, M. Van Cassel, speaks.

"A man who is the author of numerous novels and has gained notoriety . . . this man has spat a tremendous insult in the face of all France. . . . He had sought nothing but renown, desiring to procure for himself the pedestal which would lift him to the rank of great man that he presumed for himself." And the proofs? Was there anything produced to show that an *order had been given by the War-Council* to acquit Esterhazy? It was on this legal note that he closed his charge to the jury. The court, obdurate as ever, likewise charged the jury to confine itself to *this* question. . . .

And then, the man who was "avid of notoriety" read his declaration to the jury.

"In the house of Deputies on the 22nd of January, to the frantic applause of his complacent majority, M. Méline declared that he had confidence in the twelve citizens in whose hands he bestowed the defense of the army. It is of you, gentlemen, he spoke, the order to condemn me as in the case of. . . ."

The Court: "No order has been given by M. Méline!"

A thunderous howling and shrieking throughout the exasperated court-room for many minutes.

Zola raises his hand, and at length goes on. His face wrinkles over the papers which his drawn nerves agitate in his hands. It is a closed face; only the spectacles and the great convex brow can be seen. The thin Zola seems almost tall. His figure is not elegant. "Something of the poor lawyer" about him, said Yvette Guilbert. He is a poor great man, launched in this adventure, at the autumn of his life. His voice is muffled, without nuances, as he goes on. The whole physique of this "professor of energy" seems used and wearied by the ordeal. And yet more than ever the world hangs upon his words; the words themselves are as always eloquently combative and belong bodily to this drama. There is always too the note of unconquerable pride. . . .

"If I am here before you, it is because I wished to be, desiring of my own free will that the whole obscure monstrous affair be brought before your jurisdiction.

"We have had to fight step by step against an obstinate will for darkness.

"I give M. Méline the most formal denial. I deny having insulted the army. I leave to history the judgment of my action. It is those bandits, who embrace Esterhazy that insult the Army. Great God! that the people of St. Louis, of Bayard, of Condé, of the great wars of the Republic and the Empire should cry 'Long live Esterhazy!' "

He takes up the stories of the Syndicate:

"In striking at me you shall only make me the greater. He who suffers for truth and justice becomes august and sacred. Look at me: [murmurs] have I the mien of one who is bribed, of a liar, of a traitor? . . ."

Silence is observed more and more as Zola goes on. The courtroom is aware of the solemnity of these notes he strikes, of the momentous problem posed. Vibrantly Zola perorates:

"Dreyfus is innocent, I swear it. I pledge my life, my honor upon it. At this solemn hour, before this tribunal which represents human justice, before all France, before the entire world, I swear that Dreyfus is innocent. And, by my forty years of labor, and by the authority which this toil may have given me, I swear that Dreyfus is innocent. And by all that I have won, by the name I have made for myself, by my works which have aided the spread of French letters, I swear that Dreyfus is innocent. May all of that crumble, may my works perish, if Dreyfus is not innocent! He is innocent.

"All seem to be against me, the two Chambers, the civil powers, the military powers, the great newspapers, the public opinion which they have poisoned. And I have nothing for me but the Idea, the Ideal of truth and justice. And I am calm, I shall conquer.

"I desired that my country take no longer the way of deception and injustice. I may be sentenced here. Some day France will thank me for having helped to save her honor."

A singular vision. Singular drama to which Zola lends for eternity the accents of Zola.

And now Maître Labori advances. He symbolizes the force, the muscles of justice. He begins *sotto voce*. The whole affair, every twist, every obscure shadow of it, all the panorama unrolls. He sweats blood and flesh. Exults in it. His orchestral voice rumbles louder and louder. His whole long, agile body gesticulates, ath-

etically, theatrically. He has been told by Zola to speak only f Dreyfus, to defend only the other victim, so long as it is suf-ered. Nothing of the like has ever been seen before. He turns ow upon the chauvinists, upon the Jew-haters, in denunciation; e pleads now to the calm and the reasoning. He is dexterous, voids pitfalls, cuts his way craftily through the jungle of inter-ictions. The whole session of the 21st passes, while an ocean of ords issues from him. The 22nd. The 23rd. Three days! Will othing stop the man? (Even afterward, as with a bullet in his ack, he returns again the peer of a thousand mortal lawyers!) he public shuddered, cried out, wept under the fingers of this ossessed magician. They wept at the clear story of Dreyfus, at is letters, at the spectacle of mediaeval torture.

"The letter of M. Zola was a cry for justice. It was violent; ut it was necessary. Be intimidated no more. Do not fear the anger of a war. . . . Do not sentence Emile Zola, gentlemen f the jury! You know well that he is the honor of France. It with the heart, with moral energy that one gains victories. And too, I cry 'Long live the Army,' as I ask you to acquit Zola. I ould cry at the same time: 'Long live the Republic! Long live the ght! Long live justice and truth!' and it is in calm confidence at I await your sentence!"

Fernand Labori, too, had made himself immortal. It was ot only his magisterial oratory, never again equaled,—flung as was from the triumphant, inexhaustible health of conviction ith which his whole powerful frame vibrated—it was his argu-ent, brilliant, swift, matchless, voluminous, wielding a mountain f details! Nothing under the sun could be added to this stupen-ous effort. The public was stricken, ominous; the Generals, the ourt aghast; the jury was stupefied.

Slowly the Court recovered, and in his thick voice instructed e members of the jury of their *confined* task. No one cared. illions of hearts beat richly for thirty-five minutes in the con-

templation of a miracle! Others saw perhaps a massacre, a mad rush, upon the accused in this very court-room.

And after thirty-five hundred years, the very small jury and its very small foreman appeared and answered to the questions of the Court:

"Zola guilty?—Yes, seven to five!"

"Extenuating circumstances?"—The vote was even, thus of no force.

And thus "the greatest writer and the strongest conscience" of the age was granted the maximum sentence under the law: one year of imprisonment, 3,000 francs fine.

Jubilee! Bells, a mad cacophony of screams, menaces, laughter, cries.

The fatigued, intoxicated mass surged in all directions, the "Apaches" outside intoned their war-cries.

"Cannibals!" exclaimed Zola with disgust.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FUGITIVE

EMILE ZOLA was in flight.

An express train rolls swiftly across the level plains of northern France. The oppressive summer night falls; the last illuminations of Paris vanish.

Emile Zola, all alone in a compartment, his hat jammed down over his face, staring out of the window from his corner, is fleeing from France, clandestinely, like a furtive criminal, to linger in exile in a foreign land, for months, years, perhaps forever. . . .

This day the 18th of July, 1898, was written in his life the day in which he "bled all his blood." His heart was empty; his whole being "was torn and exalted at this supreme sacrifice," of his repose, his honor, his happiness. This "consented immolation," this exile to the most secret refuge, "to the silence of the tomb," to the total obliteration of himself—ah! he promised that he would tell it all some day, and these atrocious hours as the train rolled across the sleeping plains, "when his soul was bathed in tears, but invulnerable to iniquitous wounds." As his mind pounded on with the melancholy wheels he compared himself to Dante wandering far from his beloved Florence, torn by civil war. But what was hardest of all was in the English Channel "to see far off the lights of France go out for him because, above all

things, he had desired her honor and her just greatness among the peoples. . . ."

What! Zola was fleeing from prison? And at a moment when his name was under a blight and an atrocious slander was aimed at his family?

It was not only the strangeness and suffering of exile that terrified his imaginative soul: it was what they would say of him throughout the world; and cruellest of all what his enemies in France would say! He, so courageous, so outspoken, so militant for truth, and after so many beaux gestes, so many strong and fine words, to flee before prison, to immolate himself in this obscure disappearance?

"Prison, great God! but I never asked for anything else!"

Why, then, was he in flight? Would he not have been infinitely greater in a prison cell? *Emile Zola in prison:* who knew this better than he?

The whole chimera of the fearful months since his first trial of February in the Court of Assizes passed through a mind in the familiar torment of insomnia.

There had first been an appeal for annulment of the verdict by the defense. The case was referred to the Court of Appeals of the department of Seine-et-Oise. The defense had questioned the authority of this court, and moved from appeal to appeal and delay to delay. They were fighting to gain time. Fresh revelations were being made from day to day. Ministries were falling one after another. Forgers and spies were committing suicide, as in the case of Lemercier-Picard, who they knew had worked for Henry. Above all the trial of Colonel Georges Picquart offered tremendous hope of showing up the "secret portfolio" on which Dreyfus had been convicted.

Zola had desired this situation: the open public trial of the Affair. "But its whole train of legal guerilla warfare, the harassed march from one accessory trial to another, the rigmarole

of harangues, of testimony, of miserable boredom," the upheaval of his methodic and secluded life, offered a sad disillusionment.

He had complained curiously, "if I could only have done an hour of bicycling in court, and worked the rest of the time! . . ."

But then the worthy bourgeois that was Zola had been horrified at the unabashed wickedness of the enemy. There had been no bounds of fair play to the campaign of slander; and he had imposed upon himself the rule of remaining silent, of making no further public utterance.*

He could not, then, conceive how furious his pride and the high rhythms of his denunciations rendered his adversaries.

But a blow had fallen which flung him into an anguish drawn from no other experience. His father, who had been something of an adventurer, who had ended by displaying constructive genius, and planned fortifications for Paris, a protected harbor for Marseilles, and brought water to the parched city of Aix,—this father, who had died suddenly, when Emile Zola was but a child of seven, whom all Provence had honored and the son worshiped because he had remained a vaguely human, a distant but beloved phantom—this father whom he had been brought up to venerate, was suddenly subjected to the most abominable slander in the effort to ruin the son!

One day then, as he returned from a wearisome session at the Court of Versailles (May 23, 1898), whither his last appeal had been brought, he had picked up a copy of the *Petit Journal*, penny newspaper of huge circulation:

EMILE ZOLA'S FATHER A THIEF!

It was a vague reference to the affair of nearly three-quarters of a century ago. An episode of ephemeral importance; if real, pardoned and long-forgotten, erased by subsequent public honors.

* The secret of Zola's double household was made public by the anti-Dreyfus press at this time, in garbled form.

Zola had been attained by this blow. His reply in the *Aurore* a few days later, in defense of his parent, is a perfect evocation of the heated passion of this period. He cited the honors accorded François Zola by King Louis Philippe, by the Minister Thiers, by the city of Aix, which twenty years before had named a boulevard after him, as well as the Canal Zola known throughout Provence. The documents furnished by Henry, he declared to be false, truncated. He began moreover, proceedings for libel against the owner of the newspaper, characteristically named, Judet.

He had hurtled against the resistance of the War-Office when he demanded to see the archives so accessible to his enemies.

During these days Zola had seemed like a wounded lion. Throwing everything else aside, he and his counselors gathered evidence from Algeria, from Provence, from everywhere, pointing to the triviality of the charge. Even the files of the War-Office had been opened finally before his great clamor; the disordered portfolios searched, the absence of documents noted, the clear indications of another inside falsification revealed. . . . The proceedings had dragged through the month of June, into July.

Finally the three experts, Belhomme, Couard and Varinard, denounced in *J'accuse!* had opened a libel suit against him for 300,000 francs. A staggering sum, with all chances in favor of their gaining the verdict!

In the meantime, a General Bertulus had been appointed by the new Brisson ministry to prosecute further those who had insulted the army. The strange suspicion persisted in spreading, to the Dreyfusards even, that in the changing political atmosphere here was a rigorous man whose findings would throw open once more the whole Affair. It was at this time that Zola and his companions-in-arms had arrived before the Court of Assizes at Versailles, to make once more an appeal for a re-trial. (July 18th, 1898). The present citation of Zola for defamation had been further reduced to *three lines* of the now famous Letter to the

President! On the eve of this hearing, Zola had written a defiant letter to the Minister Brisson: "Even three lines were perhaps too many! . . . Even in those three lines a window might suddenly open that would admit a flood of light! . . ." But it was laughable: an unheard of strangling of justice. Zola had gone on to admonish the Minister that his Cabinet would soon fall, and that the like would happen to one ministry after another, until the malevolent tumor of the Dreyfus Affair were purified. . . .

One newspaper on the eve of this new trial in an inflammatory article had pointed out for the knowledge of all anti-Dreyfusards that the Court at Versailles *had no rear or side exits.* It might be a fine ambuscade!

Georges Clemenceau, getting wind that the person who had written this call of the Apaches to the massacre was one whom he had once befriended, replied in his newspaper menacingly: ". . . You will hear from me again!"

There had been an ominous crowd about the court at Versailles. Esterhazy roamed among them with a loaded pistol which was for Picquart who was expected to testify. But Picquart was locked up in a military prison.

The crowd waited uneasily for Zola and his body-guard to appear. There were a goodly number of police.

Suddenly a great roar was heard from far off; it approached, became more deafening and then, belching smoke and thunder, a huge automobile—one of the first, of the vintage of 1898—dashed into the square and made for the gates of the court-yard. The crowd scattered wildly to right and to left. Out of this colossal engine seven men arose, threw off their light cloaks and sun-glasses, and strode into the court: Zola, Bruneau, Desmoulins, Labori and the three Clemenceau brothers.

The trial was brief.

Labori asked for a further stay. They were fighting only for time now, in the knowledge of what was going on behind the scenes. It was refused. Labori asked for the right to testify on

"related facts" instead of the three lines cited. Refused. The defense, in the face of this brutal justice, declined with premeditation to present its case. The judgment was rendered then by the judge, without recourse to a jury, *by default.*

It was on the hot and dusty journey back to Paris, that Georges Clemenceau and Labori had made a momentous proposal to Zola. They had proposed to him that he take flight, go to England at once, in order to prevent the judgment from becoming *operative.* Thus he could return in two or three months and, with the important proofs they were confident of having by then, re-open the whole case at will.

The idea at once seemed revolting to Zola. He resisted it. He preferred prison a thousand times to flight and exile.

They arrived in Paris through the Bois de Boulogne and stopped at the home of Zola's old friend Georges Charpentier, where they held a hasty conference. Mme. Zola was present.

"What a rôle for my husband!" she had cried stormily. "It is absolutely unworthy of his character. And what will people say? . . ."

Clemenceau and Labori insisted. It was in the interest of the Affair that Zola leave, envelop himself in the utmost secrecy, remain in the most secluded and guarded refuge, so that he might not be extradited until they were ready. And no sensible persons would accuse him of flight from prison since a condemnation by default was only provisory.

Zola was very moved at this new adventure thrust upon him. He would be universally denounced. The great public would see only the ideas of: *Zola condemned; Zola in flight.* Whereas in prison he would be a symbol for the whole world, the recipient of an irresistible tide of sympathy? He must at all costs, they said, avoid a definitive, a third condemnation from becoming operative; in exile he would be a shadowy menace for the friends of Esterhazy. The Dreyfusards would gain time above all.

"It was his greatness," says the historian Reinach, "that,

knowing how much nobler he would be in prison, he yet had the moral nobility to go."

He resigned himself finally, saying that "where there was the most suffering for himself, there it was his duty to go. . . ."

He related also to Reinach that "he could hear Dreyfus on his rock imploring him to make this supreme sacrifice."

From now on, he would "devote himself to his total disappearance," he would blot his name out, in order "to keep the small sacred lamp" of truth from being extinguished.

At nightfall, without even passing his home again, alone, so as not to attract attention, he departed.

"Through what ordeals they cause the truth to pass, and what victims are sacrificed for her along the way!" he had exclaimed but a few days before. "Have faith, nevertheless. We shall conquer!"

Was it truly in the interest of the Affair to have Zola vanish? Would a third condemnation have been final? There is not every certainty. It was a question of tactics, with legal nuances, decided swiftly in the heat of the moment. These men too, were of the romantic nineteenth century to their core, Zola, Labori, Clemenceau. The essence of the whole episode in the life of France is Hugoësque romance. The other leaders of the revisionists were not even told of the flight until they saw the newspapers. On that very morning—would Zola have departed if he had known?—a further sensational "document" on Zola's father had appeared in the calumnious *Petit Journal*. The public would surely not understand. Indeed it was the hardest rôle of all.

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Arrived in London, which he had visited so auspiciously but five years before, Zola went to the Hotel Grosvenor, recommended to him by Clemenceau. On this same day, he wrote to perhaps the only person he knew or thought he could depend on, E. A. Vizetelly, his English translator:

"Do not tell anyone in the world, and above all any newspaper, that I am in London. And do me the favor of coming to see me tomorrow, Wednesday, at eleven o'clock at the Grosvenor Hotel. You will ask for M. Pascal. And above all, absolute silence, for there are very serious interests at stake.

"Cordially,

"Emile Zola."

Emile Zola tried to sleep that night. The hours passed with the slow terror and strangeness of dreams. Had he been followed? Had he been recognized? There was scarcely a day from now on when he did not feel himself trailed by some member of the "Black Cabinet."

Vizetelly came punctually and found Zola in the company of Fernand Desmoulins and Bernard Lazare who had followed him a day later. Lazare returned at once to Paris, while Desmoulins who spoke English remained a fortnight longer.

The most important matter for the moment was whether under the English laws the refugee could be extradited for the conviction by default that had been pronounced. Vizetelly brought a friend who was a member of the bar, a Mr. F. W. Wareham, who was taken into the secret and consulted. It was learned that the French law could be enforced here and it was decided that Zola must leave London at once for some secluded spot. For in the hotel his presence seemed to be already suspected, and an Englishwoman had seemed to recognize him in the street near Buckingham Palace. Mr. Wareham generously offered his own home at Prince's Road, Wimbledon, as a temporary retreat for the novelist. But Zola did not stay here long fearing that Wimbledon was too populous, too near London and Merton, where Vizetelly lived, and Vizetelly was already being besieged by reporters. He moved then to the small and out-of-the-way Oatland's Park Hotel near Weybridge.

English reporters had got wind of Zola's arrival, and had

even found his trail to Wimbledon. With remarkable spirit, they dropped it, and respected his privacy. There had been a great commotion throughout Europe upon news of Zola's departure, and rumors spread everywhere that he had been discovered by turns, in Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Norway even.

In Paris, Georges Clemenceau had written an article in the name of Zola, published in the *Aurore*: "In October, I shall return to face my judges. . . ." But the step was not generally understood. "Zola flees from prison!" said the headlines of the enemy press. And the defenders of Dreyfus took notes of their casualties: Scheurer-Kestner dying; Emile Zola in exile; Colonel Picquart in prison.

The great duel went on; even at this dark hour, fresh sensations were preparing themselves for the morrow. It had for a long time been far more than a combat over the fate of Dreyfus; it was a racial, a religious, a political feud, at once.

Duels were fought every day in all the corners of France and Europe: families, friendships, bonds of long years, were rent suddenly never to be joined again. "The whole planet rang with it," says Rosny in his memoirs. "The masses of Israelites were agitated throughout the world, from Whitechapel to New York, from the slavic ghettoes, from Oriental cities to the Antipodes. . . ." Immigrant Russians, poor wretches en route for America, could be heard speaking of Dreyfus as some Christ and Zola as his prophet. Likewise, among the *Aryan* Dreyfusards, a war of faith raged, above all in the upper classes. The salons were fevered nightly, whether guelph or ghibelline. But no one was more slandered than Zola. "Menaces of death, parcels of excrement, infernal machines, atrocious caricatures, he suffered all of this. And by sympathizers he was pictured, issuing from the court, amid uplifted canes, curses, howls, carrying only an umbrella under his arm, his lorgnon dancing febrilely upon his nose, deathly pale, with the air of a bourgeois lost in a jungle, worthy, nevertheless, very courageous surely! For nothing could have seemed

more horrible to this nervous man, ready to swoon during a stormy night, and incapable of offering anybody a punch. . . ."

All this was now far away, for the author of *J'accuse;* the thunder and dust of these two factions, with necks bared to each other, eyes and teeth glaring, relentless, irreconcilably fighting on, reached him in a small faint echo.

A pleasant, furnished cottage, had been found after several weeks, at Penn, Oatland's Chase, and here Zola acquired a grammar and began to study English so that he could struggle on equal terms with the London newspapers. The unfailing Desmoulins had gone back to Paris, and soon returned with Zola's portfolio of notes for the first of the Evangelical Novels, *Fécondité.*

Fécondité! For, although overwhelmed with injury, dogged by maddened partisans, Zola had gone on calmly planning a work that had been staked out years before. The last novel, *Paris,* had appeared in March, a few days after the first trial, and with the wave of public opinion there had been a disastrous collapse in sales.

News came now that the three experts Zola had denounced in *J'accuse* had been awarded 30,000 francs in damages. It was all the ready money that remained to his account with Charpentier and Fasquelle. He had lived largely, spending his huge earnings upon objects of art such as he cherished. It had been a principle with him never to own securities; to live only upon what he gained from his daily toil. Now he must draw his belt in. . . .

"Zola was immensely prosperous up to the Affair," observed Clemenceau many years after. "But on the morrow of *J'accuse* there was a *chute.* . . ."

And publicly, Zola was suspended from the Legion of Honor, of which he had been an officer. Anatole France and other Legionnaires tore up their ribbons. The legend was spread that Zola had gone abroad to indulge in orgies with his Jewish gold.

The utter loneliness from which Zola regarded the upheavals

of France, was made dreadful with anticipation, as he awaited good or evil developments. During the long solitary hours when he promenaded, the faces of strangers terrified him with forebodings. Vizetelly, who was impressionable enough, suffered with the obsession of being pursued. The fear of armed assailants was absurdly present.

The daughter of Zola's translator, Violet Vizetelly, a charming young girl of twelve or thirteen who had been bred in Paris, was long the fugitive's sole companion and confidant. His life was of the utmost retirement and monotony, punctuated by the shock of events felt from far off. News was sent him through the "underground channel"; his friends would write simply to Wareham, who conveyed the messages through Vizetelly, or himself. In replying, Zola used various names: he was known, to begin with, as Monsieur Pascal; but judging this too obvious, used names later which could be both English and French, such as Richard, Beauchamp, Roger.

On the 31st of August, Vizetelly sent the following message on to Zola:

"*Prepare yourself for a great success.*"

The words, so meaningless, so full of mystery threw him into a prodigious agitation. He sat for hours talking feverishly to the child Violet Vizetelly, a hundred conjectures of what might be happening rushing through his head. Nothing in the newspapers of that day had presented any new turn in the situation. In his growing anxiety he had become quite feverish, and passed a terrible night.

The young girl too was obsessed by a fearful dream: in an immense shadowed square, a man lay expiring, surrounded by a vast multitude of people who made strange cries in French. Among them, she saw Zola, waving his arms, with an expression of great joy on his face. The girl had cried out many times in her tormented slumber, and Zola wide-eyed all night had heard her.

Her dream was related to him in the morning, and his perplexity and disquietude deepened.

An hour later the morning papers came, bearing the news of Lieutenant-Colonel Henry's confession of forgery and his suicide in the prison of Mont-Valérien the night before.

The sense of the telegram, sent through Vizetelly, was now clear, since the informants had doubtless known of the arrest of Henry.

Henry's confession and self-destruction, threw a great light upon the whole obscure drama. It was the clear justification of the hardier spirits who had embraced the cause. The whole nation was profoundly shaken, and surely, he thought now, all people of good faith would be won over to revision in a mass.

Zola experienced now a great shudder of hope. The end of his exile was approaching: it was a matter of days now. He wrote impassioned letters to Labori and to Clemenceau, proposing his return and the re-opening of his case, since the document upon which he had been convicted was now acknowledged false.

To his grief he received only letters full of anxiety. His comrades painted the situation as very grave. The Minister, Brisson, found obstacles, treachery on every hand, in his efforts for revision. The public mind was now all the more enflamed; so that the return of Emile Zola would be veritably an incendiary torch that would provide further embarrassment for the Ministry, new danger for the cause. Zola, perforce, with anguish, inclined to this view, and prepared for a prolonged sojourn in his obscure corner of England.

In Paris, Esterhazy and another of his mistresses, were now in prison; Henry, feeling himself lost, had killed himself. Du Paty, even, was being sacrificed. Boisdeffre, crushed by the revelations, resigned as Chief of the General Staff: other generals resigned. The pillars were falling.

Joseph Reinach began writing a series of extraordinary articles

in the *Siècle* pointing to the dead Henry as the accomplice of Esterhazy and the instrument of all the machinations.

But the issue now became embroiled with that of defending the army, whose leadership was fast being demoralized. The attacks of revolutionists like Urbain Gohier's "The Army against the Nation," served only to crystallize the indifference of the frightened middle classes as to the revision of Dreyfus' sentence. More street brawls, mob violence, rumors of a military plot for a coup d'état, wild fear of a war with England at the time of the Fashoda incident—and this last would have driven Zola out of his hiding place—all these developments left little hope of the triumph of justice, of early peace.

Toward the end of September, Zola was further depressed on hearing that a seizure would be effected upon his house in the rue de Bruxelles. His possessions were to be sold to the sum of 32,000 francs in favor of the discredited experts, Belhomme, Couard and Varinard. A curious crowd came, filling the rooms of the novelist. There were many sympathizers, who sought souvenirs. The first object of furniture placed under the hammer was the heavy ancient writing table. Eugène Fasquelle by pre-arrangement offered 32,000 francs, and the affair was over.

In the meantime the case against the newspaper publisher who had defamed Zola's father toiled through the courts and was won, with damages of 5,000 francs.

The succession of these episodes, and not the least, also, the tolerated flight of Esterhazy to England, made the author of *J'accuse* sink to a low state.

"I am feeling very ill today . . ." runs a letter to Vizetelly, with whom he was in daily communication. "It is one of these nervous crises, which torment me when I work too hard, or when I bear too great a shock."

It was the illness of his favorite dog "Pinpin," that was almost the last straw.

The novelist's attachment to his animal pets was an old story;

but "Pinpin" was the Pomeranian pet, who curled up on his desk, while he wrote, or slept in his waste-paper basket. It was unlawful to bring the dog to England, and without his master he languished in Paris and dragged toward his end.

Zola really became severely sick now; it was one of his periodic attacks of angina pectoris, the heart pains aggravated by his depression. He would see no doctor, and the medicine he was in the habit of taking was sent by Mme. Zola, from France. At moments, breathless, strangled with the pressure upon his heart and lungs, he would groan:

"I shall die in this way one of these days! But there is no use of calling a doctor. They can do no more than I am doing."

One morning he saw from the window, his friend Vizetelly, coming toward the house with a joyful face. He was bringing news of Brisson's final decision to refer the revision of the Dreyfus case to the Court of Appeals.

"Is it a telegram about *Pinpin?*" Zola cried.

When Vizetelly shook his head, in negation, his face darkened, and he could not even brighten up over the more cheerful political outlook.

When Pinpin died, he was very dour; but with the doubt ended, he was much more able to rally his spirits.

In his abnegation, in his "complete silence of one who was in a tomb, of the dead who do not speak," these were "atrocious hours" as Zola watched the spectacle in France of his people in convulsions, in a moral collapse or decadence that meant perhaps their early extinction? "I could not desire for the worst criminals the suffering which was caused in me every morning in reading despatches from France, on that foreign soil, where they assumed a frightful atmosphere of folly and catastrophe."

When late in October, the Criminal Chamber at Paris announced the legality of the plea for revision in view of new evidence, Zola got ready once more to return. But warning letters came from his friends telling him that he could not judge, from

where he was, the state of mind in France, that he must remain abroad and hope for the complete swing of the tide that would liberate and justify him. The truth was on the march, indeed, but impatience on his part such as would cause fresh agitation might destroy all! Indeed the conduct of the affair in this later period, was now in the hands of more or less well-intentioned politicians, who were following all the intricate mummery of their elaborate game, a game for which the blunter Zola methods might well have been perilous.

And so, although Esterhazy in London had already confessed to having written the *bordereau* ("under orders" he now maintained, facetiously), Emile Zola settled down to a vague period of exile, resisting depression and despair as well as he could.

His spirits improved with the coming of Mme. Rozerot and his children Jacques and Denise, who were now seven and nine years old. His devotion to them was excessive; he busied himself again with their education.

He moved now to Addlestone, then to a modest hotel in Norwood, where he hired a small furnished apartment. The severe table he was reduced to, was now laden with the manuscript and documents of *Fécondité*.

From time to time discreet visits were paid to him. His old friend Théodore Duret of the Cézanne days came; also Fasquelle, George Moore, his "disciple" Octave Mirbeau, pugnacious Norman pirate, and author of the notorious, "Diary of a Chamber-Maid." Labori came for a consultation toward Easter; and finally Jean Jaurès.

The famous Socialist leader recorded his interview with charm. In this plain suburban hotel, whose windows overlooked a row of workingmen's cottages, he found a deeply changed Zola, whose faith and whose aspirations were now curiously in sympathy with his own:

"He lived under a pseudonym, in an incognito which all the English had penetrated, but which they fully respected with that

admirable sense of discretion which is the honor of their hospitality.

"I recall words from his lips in which were completely contained the novelist of yesterday and the novelist of the morrow. He lifted the curtain of his window and staring at the little cottages of English workingmen opposite, said to me:

" 'The employée leaves in the morning at a fixed hour; he returns every evening at a determined hour; I should like very much to know what goes on within him during that interval.'

"This was the Zola of the old period.

"Then he pointed to the work he had begun and said to me:

" 'I believe that the crisis through which I am passing and from which I am suffering will have the effect of renovating minds and directing them more surely to the quest of the true and the good. . . . I feel new stars rising.' "

It is well toward the end of his life, and this mystical language permits us to imagine that he would continue hereafter to write, all vibrant with a final certitude. He had just discovered for himself the exalted mission of renovating contemporary minds, of offering to the masses a new ideal of modern Evangelism. In the vague light shed by the new stars, he would be writing "Fecundity," "Labor," "Truth." He would be writing "Justice," when death took him. . . .

He would come forth from exile proclaiming that "in the irremediable decadence of modern society," and in the desolation of present times, he discerned clearly a radiant future.

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President Félix Faure died suddenly on the 16th of February 1899. Zola like many others had considered him the silent foe of Revision. The death of this idolized statesman was attributed to the sudden shock suffered a few hours previously upon revelations with regard to the Dreyfus affair made by a foreign visitor of royal family.

Zola was overcome again with agitation, since upon the choice of a successor, everything depended. Fortunately, in the person of Loubet, a friend of Revision was elected. Fresh upheavals. A fanatic smashed the President's silk hat with his cane at the races in Auteuil. This incident was followed a few days later, during the funeral of Faure, by the movement of a brigade of soldiers in full insurrection toward Paris from Neuilly, nearby. The agitators Déroulède and Habert, tried to head this division toward the Elysée Palace: its General, a disciplined soldier, diverted the insurrection with some pains back toward the barracks of Reuilly.

At the elaborate proceedings of the inquest now going on, Picquart as former chief of the Secret Service was testifying brilliantly and entirely without reticence. A kind of idolatry sprang up for this man.

The political atmosphere at low pressure was changing suddenly as in a cyclone. The Revisionists, i.e. formerly Dreyfusards, were sweeping all before them. On June 3, 1899, the Court of Appeals in solemn deliberation annulled the decision of 1894, and ordered Dreyfus to return from Devil's Island and appear before a third Military Tribunal at Rennes.

Zola, daily more excited as he awaited this decision, had finished *Fécondité* in May. He had decided to return at all events. Foreseeing the favorable decision, he had composed a public statement to be issued upon the day of his return in the *Aurore.*

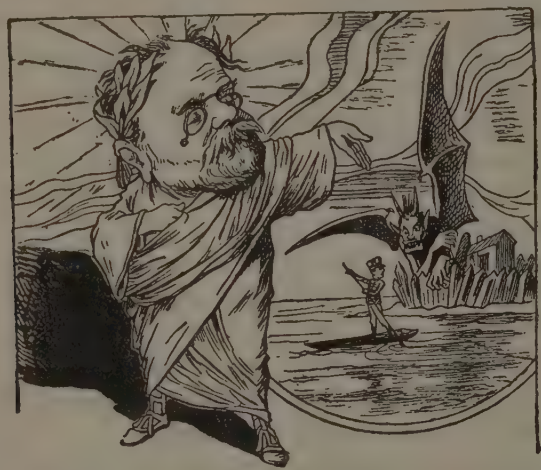
In the evening of the 3rd of June, he received a code telegram: "Checque postponed"; which meant that a new trial had been authorized.

With Fasquelle and his wife who were then visiting him, Zola, beaming with joy, departed for Paris on Sunday the 4th of June, 1899. England he abandoned without regret, like so many other exiles whom her hospitable laws and discreet manners had sheltered. Indeed there had been, since the Dreyfus Affair, a remarkable change of sentiment toward him in England, where some

years before the father of Vizetelly who was the publisher of the Zola translations had been hounded into prison by obsessed pastors.

Arriving at the Gare Saint-Lazare, the following morning, Zola without fanfares, without processions or horns, slipped quietly to the rue de Bruxelles nearby.

He purchased on his way the morning's edition of the *Aurore,*



THE RETURN OF DREYFUS

Zola: My Prophecy is Borne Out. Right has Finally Triumphed.

and read in a display upon the front page, under the caption, "Justice," his own statement to the public, timed with his return to France.

Thus, after eighteen months of a ferocious civil warfare, unequalled in its political violences, strewn with tragic asides, the end was in sight. And the accusations of his terrible Letter to the President, all corroborated, how pale they seemed now!

He was now "without anger or rancor." He felt neither "the desire nor the need of triumphing." The work was done; it was not a harvest of hatred; it was "a harvest of goodness, equity, in-

finite hope which we have sown. . . ." For the Prosecuting Attorney, he was "at home."

"It is eleven months (actually a year) since I left France. During eleven months, I imposed upon myself the most complete exile, the most absolute silence. It was like a voluntary death, couched in a secret tomb, awaiting truth and justice. And today, truth having vanquished, justice reigning at length, I am reborn. I return and take again my place upon French soil."

CHAPTER XIX

THE LAST VISIONS: A NATURALIST DEATH.

"For forty years I have been dissecting, I ought to be allowed to dream a little in my old days."

WOULD the longed for armistice never come?

Emile Zola had installed himself tranquilly in Médan during the summer of 1899. Nothing had changed here; no violent hand had been laid upon the pretentious order of this garden; the Seine flowed by as musically, down its flower-laden valley.

The novelist was now gripped with a last certitude, which "everything points to and demonstrates: that the future society lies in the reorganization of labor, and that only this reorganization will bring in the end the final and just redistribution of wealth." Fourier had first announced this doctrine; he would take it and present his vision of the City of the Future, "the embryo of which can be seen in the coöperative organizations of our troubled time." Let others laugh; evolution would bring about *solidarity*.

Zola was wrapped again in his laborious rôle of the novelist who performs his task in solitude.

The last gaudy *feux d'artifice* were yet to go off.

On July 1st of this year, a strange figure of a young man,

with mad eyes and whitened hair, stepped from a French war-cruiser upon the soil of France. His face darkened by the blazing sun, his body wasted, his brain stupefied, he knew nothing of the convulsions throughout the world that had accompanied his exile. Five weeks later, still in a daze, he appeared at the court-martial of Rennes. There was a grand exodus from Paris; soldiers, journalists, politicians, lawyers, propagandists, bandits. The new ministry of Waldeck-Rousseau had set Picquart at liberty; it had made no move to prosecute Zola anew; it had indicated clearly to the military tribunal of Rennes the decision it awaited. In the meantime in a panic over royalist intrigues, it girded itself to a "defense of the Republic" against the insurrection attended upon the acquittal of Dreyfus.

Defile: All the witnesses for the Zola trial and for the recent Court of Appeals session; orators, Secret Service tools, gossipers, heroes, buffoons. The military faction defends itself in a menacing *bloc,* dominates the debate. Dreyfus tonelessly makes his plea, with no more lyrical accents than before. On the 14th of August, an unknown bandit breaks loose and shoots Labori in the back. The indomitable barrister climbs out of a bed a few days later and resumes the long drawn-out trial. Nearly five weeks of this terrible last act have passed; prolonged excessively beyond all the dictates of sound dramaturgy—and the Universal Exposition of 1900 approaches! When everything has been divulged, and the whole world knows that Dreyfus has been simply the butt of destiny. . . .

At last by five votes to two the verdict:

"*Dreyfus is declared guilty of treason*—UNDER EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES!"

A long shudder of horror swept through the whole world. And who had ever heard of *extenuating circumstances* for high treason?

Zola wrote one more manifesto: "The Fifth Act." He confessed to a sense of his reason giving way. His own two trials had

been "idylls, flowering with hope," beside the monstrosity of the affair at Rennes. Dreyfus the "poor human wreck who had made stones to weep, saw his former comrades come to give him one more finishing kick. . . ." There would never in the world be "a more execrable monument to human infamy" than the report of the Rennes Court-Martial.

The closing note of this manifesto was one of curious optimism. The Dreyfus Affair is a gigantic drama; its "extraordinary unravelling" reveals it to be under the direction of some sublime Dramaturge. Destiny? "With each new act horror has burst forth, more intense." And this Dramatist desires plainly some "superhuman last act which will place France again at the head of the nations. . . ."

The poor human politicians of the Cabinet perceived however the worldly-wise aspects of the Third Court-Martial's decision, "Save the honor of the army first; establish justice next." Their duty was clear. On the 19th of September, Alfred Dreyfus, standing now under a sentence of ten years' imprisonment, was *pardoned* by President Loubet.

The whole harassed nation, whose business affairs had declined dangerously during the two years past, gripping its immense headache, prepared for the stunning Industrial Exposition of Paris, at which the grotesque lankness of the Eiffel Tower was to usher in the twentieth century.

Emile Zola wrote now, in the tenderest sentiments, a "Letter to Madame Alfred Dreyfus." Peace, such as it was, had come at last; we witnessed the frightfully hypocritical gesture "of establishing a legal dishonor to cover the crime of his hangmen." It was the end of a long succession of ignominies!

"Let him sleep, calm and contented, madam, in the soft familial refuge, tended by your pious hands. And, for his glorification, depend upon us. It is we, the poets, who give glory, and we shall make his part so beautiful that no man of our time will have left a remembrance so poignant. . . . And it is we, madam, again,

the poets, who will fasten the guilty to their eternal pillory. Those whom we condemn, the ages scorn and hoot. . . ." Mixing naïveté and grandiosity, Zola concludes for himself and his comrades with the vow to maintain the good fight until the honor, too, of the innocent was rewon.

In June, 1900, a law of "general amnesty" to all the participants of the Affair was passed by the Senate. The culpable as well as the innocent were forgiven. And Zola, whose re-trial had been postponed from month to month, was absolved in company with the discredited experts who had "galloped away" with some 32,000 francs of his money.

Zola, who pointed publicly to the fact that "his work was done," who still remained "suspended" as an officer of the Legion of Honor, and who only now was rid of a pending sentence of one year in prison, inveighed once more against the injustice of this act. But he rejected the idea of carrying his trial again to the civil courts, and reversing legally the sentences against him. He refused to besmirch the end of the Great Affair in litigation over moneys! . . . How mild the charges of *J'accuse* seemed now! Zola avowed some curiosity as to what "a new jury would have thought of his action." A long chapter of the dreadful Affair was closed; he "shut himself up in his books, the mission he had given himself being ended."

Six years later, when Dreyfus had been reinstated in the army, legally cleared and decorated, the last ripples of the Affair had not yet subsided. And two years later still, the ceremony of honoring the ashes of his glorious defender saw drawn revolvers, the shots of an assassin, mob movements. . . .

A period has been placed upon an extraordinary epoch of coarse melodrama and veritable heroism. It has been spoken of with the utmost freedom here, despite the sub-conscious censorship preserved long afterward by the French mind. The average man

still shudders at mention of the thing, as one would at a nightmare which pleads to be forgotten.

Zola sought no political spoils, refused all office; he returned to that "labor for which his accomplishments most qualified him." Glory he had desired and sought in a manner that now appears if not outmoded, at least too strenuous or hazardous for the literary genius of today. He had maintained himself "at the head of the forces of progress;" his rôle had been played at a fearful personal cost, over which, it is true, one never conceives him as hesitating. In those dim, sub-conscious sessions with his *amour-propre,* he could comfort himself by foretelling what this whole abused people, destined to become his adulators, would relate of him. And so clear were his suspicions on this score, so deliberate his purpose, that one may find in his last writing (*La Vérité en Marche,* and the last novel, *Vérité*), the proud, vigorous, unabashed narration of his heroism, and the very words one should use in honoring him!

"The Dreyfus Affair has made me a better man," the master said on many occasions.

He was an old man now, although "still in the prime of his life." More than ever he preferred to pass his time solitarily, in his beautiful garden, "delicious afternoons spent in regarding all that lives about me."

If in so much of his early and middle life he had been all sedentary, he had expiated for this by the swift and stormy scenes of his prime; intense years, passionate and spectacular.

Indubitably he felt himself old.

He came to dine with an association of young writers, grouped with *La Plume.* He said:

"I have come to drink with you young men to the departure of the old men, but you should at least give them a fine funeral. . . ."

He said further:

"I should be allowed to dream a little in my old age. . . ."

It was the time also of immense public testimonials, from partisans throughout the world. The masses, whose votes had overturned governments and whose conscience he above all others had labored to awaken, now brought flowers to his threshold. And throughout the world, the voices of great men uttered compassion and encouragement: Mark Twain from America, Tolstoy from Russia, Bjoernson from Scandinavia. . . . Medals were struck in his honor by divers associations, newly sprung up in these days, such as the League for the Rights of Man. The most notable of these was the large Alexandre Charpentier medal, bearing on its face the legend, "*Hommage à Emile Zola*"; and on the reverse; "*La Vérité est en marche et rien ne l'arrêtera.*"

A gifted younger writer, Laurent Tailhade, cried in an access of enthusiasm: "Zola is an epic poet; perhaps the only one of France!"

And Zola now preferred more and more to think of himself as a poet, he who had written cold-bloodedly so many livid slices-of-life. And indeed, a letter of the period, to his loyal friend Alfred Bruneau, giving an account of the hours he passed in his garden in solitude, ("and it is not disagreeable,") indicates that he hopes to "occupy himself with their poems" and how, "with oncoming age, I feel all things slipping from me, and yet love them the more passionately."

These poems, *Messidor* and *l'Ouragan*, were dramatic poems, which Alfred Bruneau was to set to music, as he had "The Attack on the Mill," presented at the Opera. Poor music, of the school of Charpentier and Massenet, and of the vintage of 1901. . . .

For Zola in the ripeness of his years had become through a brave effort a music lover. He had confessed, in 1895, to having no ear whatsoever for this art, and if his musical education had begun early in the church band of Aix, as a cornetist, he had had discouraging bucketfuls of water visited upon him. He was reported, though not reliably, to have said: ". . . Apart from

Beethoven, a very great man, and of a splendid brushy silhouette, my friend, the collectors of sound were not worth their tripes." It was even observed by some, that when Massenet or some other composer went to the piano at his home, Zola would frown, and begin "agitating his right foot febrilely, all the while tapping his right ear with one finger, the sure sign of enervation and impatience."

When *Fécondité* was published in the autumn of 1899, the deliberate departure from previous methods aroused universal comment.

"Have I not the right," Zola wrote to his more friendly critics, "after forty years of analysis, to end with a little synthesis? Hypothesis, utopianism, is one of the rights of *the poet.*"

And again, "*Fécondité* is about a humanity enlarged for the needs of tomorrow."

The great alarms over the decadence of Europe, and more particularly of France, at the end of the century, must be recalled. As he contemplated the museum of social evils he had collected, Zola had recognized the declining birth-rate of France as one of the most clamorous of them.

Long before, he had presented the terrible picture of a servant maid in *Pot-Bouille,* having a lonely childbirth, and depositing her unwelcome offspring before a neutral doorstep. He now pictured thousands of such crimes, throughout the social scale; and with the aid of statistics established that "it was like an immense battle lost yearly;" 120,000 casualties being incurred upon this field of dishonor.

One must do Zola the justice of seeking to understand his intention. The new cycle of four novels, was to be the *Four Evangels,* Zola's "Four Gospels" for the City of the Future. The sons of Pierre Froment (hero of *Paris*), are as the Four Evangelists writing the new gospels for us: those of Fecundity, Labor, Truth and Justice—had Zola completed the last work.

It was all *planned,* as deliberately as ever; examination of the last manuscripts and notes, at the Bibliothèque Nationale, shows the plan of this cycle, in the novelist's, large, even hand:

"1) The fecundity which peoples the world, which makes life.
"2) The labor which organizes and regulates life.
"3) The truth which is the end of all science and prepares justice.
"4) The justice which unites humanity, recreates the family bond, assures peace and makes for ultimate happiness."

It is not merely the optimism of these conceptions, the dramatizing of these ideas, that offers contrast with the dark note of the *Rougon-Macquart;* it is the whole *mise-en-oeuvre,* the whole setting up that is different. Even a casual study of the middle novels reveals the same *tendentious* refrains, the same dramatized moral ideas and symbols. The will, however, *not to moralize,* which lent things and events their inevitable, stark meanings in *Germinal* and *L'Assommoir,* has ceded now before a "technique imposed by the subject," i.e., the doctrine. And Zola, in his own words, recognizes the intrinsic weakness of his new forms: "its unrealities, the banal verities of morality in action, the too arbitrary connections. . . ." And his justification hereafter (Letter to Octave Mirbeau, November 29, 1899), is the endowment of the new century of progress and universal peace with a faith in moral ideas.

Was not the termination of the Dreyfus Affair a triumph for ideas?

At the end of "Fecundity," then, the hero, Mathieu Froment, is 90 years old and his wife, 87; as they gather around them all their children and descendants, there are 300 at the table! Almost every chapter of this 750 page book begins with a sentence that becomes a sort of refrain:

"Two years passed and Mathieu and Marianne had another child. . . ."

They had settled upon the land, and every addition to the family was accompanied by the annexation of more fruitful terrain; whereas in Paris there had been only tableaux of abortions or infanticide. Woe to those who prevent birth, who send out their infants to nurse, exposing them to sickness, death, crime.

And another habitual note, like a litany, is:

". . . And it was always the great work, the good work, the work of fecundation, which, spreading through earth and woman, triumphant over destruction, creating new combinations for every child, loving, desiring, struggling, working, suffering, that labored ceaselessly toward more life and more hope!"

This pathetic *fatras,* with its bodiless characters, with its commonplace episodes, dictated only by the needs of the doctrine, one can scarcely comprehend a vast public reading unless one recalls the false timeliness of its message to a France panicky over dwindling natality. Its incredible error, imposed, one can only conceive, by the pansexualism of Zola, parallels that of the Catholic Church, in urging unrestricted procreation with its consequence of pullulating misery and war. If a France, cultivated to the highest degree, chose to restrict procreation, while never limiting the scope and varieties of love-making, did she not truly cast her fate upon the side of ideas and wordly-wisdom with a force sufficient to foil her most *fecund* rival? Ah, it would need all the Messianism of Zola's later novels to resist the inevitable miseries and violence inherent in "fecundity." . . .

Zola was in effect "losing all his talent," observes the contemporary critic, Faguet. The realistic writer had brought his faith, his powers of enthusiasm to bear upon socialist and humanitarian anticipations.

"And with this evolution," observes another commentator, "he acquired a clientèle of new admirers. . . . Whereas many of his followers of yesterday, no longer recognizing the bitter voice which by so many lyrical and passionate accents enchanted their youth, had the melancholy impression of finding in him nothing

but a force, henceforth impoverished, which attenuated itself in the desire to give the appearance of health."

In *Travail* ("Labor"), published in 1901, Zola presents his picture of the City of Workers. Of all the utopias, he chose to select that of Fourier, whose coöperative communes, or "phalansteries" offered for him the utmost truth. It is a happy land of social harmony and beloved labor. Luc Froment, the second son of the former Abbé, creates and directs the great coöperative factory and village with compassion and success. Elsewhere, the trials of other forms of collectivism, or anarchy, are shown fruitless; rivers of blood flow. All must in the end partake of Fourierism. It is all symbolic: Luc Froment loves marvelously the poor working girl, Josine, who has been wounded by the machine; and it is from this love that he draws his store of universal sympathy. There is a priest too, but his church is empty, and in the end its roof collapses upon him. Humanity rendered happy by socially-applied and organized Science, has no need of ancient faith. *Work* is now allied to the force of *Fecundity;* work and love breed universal happiness.

The roseate visions with which this more sympathetic work closes, were calculated to beguile our visionary youth. One can only lament bitterly how they founder in the sinister tomorrows of revolutions.

And in *Vérité* ("Truth"), 1902, one recognizes with little difficulty the Dreyfus Affair, and its famous defender, Zola, who has been all objective in the past, who has never embodied directly his own experiences, now incorporates the drama of his public action into a novel.

Indeed, it is less and less necessary in this final cycle for Zola to issue from Médan or the rue de Bruxelles in order to make those stimulating and salutary field expeditions, in which he objectively took notes upon life. This is from the stuff of his own life; surely it will surpass all else in its realization?

Marc Froment, the third Evangelist, is a teacher; his personality is aggrandized to superhuman proportions of nobility. He

has an immense brow, "like a tower." By a procedure of symbolism and antithesis (tableaux of the good example, side by side with the wrong)—the lay schools of the Republic are contrasted with the parochial schools of the Church. The character of the Dreyfus episode is mingled with another "famous case" of the period, the passional crime of a congregationalist. Here, in the novel, the Jewish instructor, Simon, is condemned unjustly, through the prejudice of the people and the pressure of the Church. Marc Froment, armed with Science, and the principle of love, vanquishes in a long and spectacular trial, evoking familiar mass-movements of the time.

The Zolaïst theories of the novel are completely abandoned; and the novel founders in his hands. Only in glimpses can the hand and the eye of the old craftsman be discerned. There is no longer the close muscular "embrace of reality" whereby Zola knew how to make things live, above all. And that this should be most lamentably true of *Vérité*, "that those great moments" of the Affair, "should appear to have been wasted, for his creative intelligence," seemed above all strange.

It is as if Zola is expiating utterly for his old militant skepticism, out of which came such prodigious visions of human animality; it is as if, feeling himself grow old, and feeling himself to have understood life so late, he offers in turn now, and with the sincerest accents, only his purified faith in that collective love which he saw as the sublimation of conjugal love.

The impurity and incompleteness, first of the City novels, the manifest weakness, then, of the Evangelical novels, have done more to becloud and undermine the high position as literature won by the Naturalistic epics than all adversaries.

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From 1900 on, Socialism makes giant strides. This party in France partakes in the Government council; for the first time it

enters politics aggressively in collaboration with moderate left wings. The drastic laws of the long Clemenceau ministry, reforming the schools, separating Church and State in France by a great cleavage, and sequestrating ecclesiastical property, all this apparent *progress,* achieved before the World War, and born out of the travail of the Dreyfus Affair, Zola could have foreseen. The army is reformed: Picquart is made a General, Labori a minister, Georges Clemenceau premier! There is progressive betterment of labor conditions; there are paternalistic laws of pension and insurance. . . . In all this the rôle of Zola, in his later years, appears now to have been strategic.

How banal these brave and constructive gestures seem in the face of impending human disaster which is to engulf whole continents! From the enigmatic spectacle of the World War, with its four years of systematic destruction, which Zola himself foresaw, the steadfast observer can turn comfortlessly only to such explanation as is offered by the nihilism, the violence, the animality painted in *L'Assommoir, Germinal, La Terre.* . . .

But by 1902, the "movement of progress" at whose head Emile Zola had placed himself, had gathered an extraordinary élan. It was the era of "popular universities," of "groups for social study," of experiments in coöperation, in educating new generations from the cradle on to a collectivist religion. Reforms, benevolent measures were vomited year by year. And the name of Emile Zola "was inscribed upon the calendar of the saints of the New Church."

Refusing persistently all office, all political preferment, the great man remained worthily in the solitude of his garden in Médan. For each being who loathed and spat upon his name, another had sprung up now who revered it as unreasoningly.

Since he emerged little, it was necessary to make pilgrimages to Médan every time a banquet was held in his honor, or an honorary presidency was conferred upon him. In June 1901, a large group of coöperative workingmen, of the Fourier variety,

tendered him a dinner in commemoration of the newly published *Travail*, so fervently partial to their aspirations.

"That which you honor and consecrate," Zola replied, apologizing for his absence, "is the good combat for human happiness . . . the effort toward justice. Is it not enough that my spirit is with you?

"Our hopes are very great, and the future lies in the domain of dreams. But from *today on*, one fact is certain; that the society of the future depends upon the reorganization of labor, and that only from this reorganization can there come a just distribution of wealth."

And to Maurice Le Blond, who offered him the honorary presidency of a society of young writers, who were girding themselves to follow his trail, he evinces joy, "in the refusal of our youth to remain shut up any longer in the ivory tower, where their elders have been chilled.

"Action! Action! All must act, all must know that it is a social crime to remain passive in such a grave hour, when the iniquitous forces of the past offer supreme combat to the energies of tomorrow!"

It is perhaps also true at this time, as older friends noted, that Zola was rather irritating in his rôle of a Great Citizen. . . .

In the winter of 1902, Antoine presents a dramatic version of *La Terre*, with modest success. There is an agreeable tumult, a bouquet of clashing sound is conferred upon the combative name: "*A bas Zola!*" and, "*Vive Zola!*" cry the Parisians.

"I felt in the master a contentment with me that filled my heart," records the famous *artiste*. "He spoke of the Abbé Mouret: 'After what you have done with Père Fouan, you alone can arrange the *Garden of Paradou*. You are decidedly my man. Massenet will write the music, and you and I will work together.' "

And completing his novel, *Vérité*, Zola's last published letters, to the composer, Bruneau, from Médan speak of occupying

himself with his poems, and with his lyrical drama, *l'Enfant Roi*, which Bruneau is to set to music—a perfect fairy tale!

Maurice Le Blond, visiting Médan in the summer of 1902, has related to us recently his impressions of the master's last literary projects. Projects merely!—For, already a long shadow lay across them. But it is significant, and it is timely to recall them here.*

Justice, which was to terminate and resolve the Evangelical Novels, was to deal with the idea, or rather the mission, of universal peace. Zola imagined for this a crusade, directed by "an aged apostle, who would entrain with him *Jean Froment* (the fourth Evangelist), in his voyages beyond all the frontiers . . . visiting in turn each nation, each king." Each long chapter would be devoted to another people. "That would give it an original form. And an apotheosis at the end of ultimate peace in the world. . . ."

It is very moving to perceive Zola in his last days with his mind fixed upon the conception of International Peace. World-conscious, he foresaw great wars; he spoke to Le Blond of his conviction that Europe, the world in fact, dwelt upon a volcano. To be sure he was not alone; all who had eyes foresaw the World War. And we are now still in the period of conversations concerning World Peace Tribunals and disarmament.

His days closing, as he saw it, in a great outpouring of universal love, Zola was now only too keenly aware of the implacable hatreds and enmities his career had invoked in his native land. Deified by his partisans he longed yet to clear himself before his enemies of the ridiculous old charge that he had been a bad patriot. . . .

Thus, he wished to assign to France—as in the era of the great French Revolution—the liberating rôle of the chosen nation. (For, if she had had her Dreyfus Affair, it had nevertheless been

* *Mercure de France,* October 15, 1927: *Les Projets Littéraires d'Emile Zola,* par Maurice Le Blond. Coincident with the 25th anniversary of Zola's death, commemorated by a dignified ceremony in the beautiful amphitheater of the Sorbonne, October 6th, 1927, posthumous mss., long guarded, were resuscitated which give an account of plans for future work.

fought in the open, and justice had won!) "*La France, messie, rédemptrice, sauveuse, reine,*" he wrote. Collectivist, he dreamed as her task the constructive revolution that would bring universal peace. One may well pardon such a large nationalism.

The sense of justice represented the only hope for world peace. His notes ramble about such ideas:

"And all that they wanted to soil me with!—My mission—*Table rase*—Tell the truth to the country. Continue my whole work of truth and frankness which they call a catastrophe for France. . . . In other countries they hide everything to exalt the nation. In England and everywhere hypocrisy. Disastrous results from this in 1870. . . .

"The centre, the pivot of *Justice* is the advance of the masses, the socialism which liberates gradually. They think only in terms of brutal force . . . without seeing that a movement of the people may carry everything away. The empires will be swept aside by the idea of justice, if this idea brings all the people to their feet. . . .

"In *Justice,* I can have Jean hold the army. A Picquart, inverted, opposed to war, in favor of the federation of the nations, for arbitration. . . .

"The rôle of France in History. Her soul. She is represented as monarchist, Catholic, jingoist—*No, no! Her patrimony of power and glory is not there! It is with us!. . . .*"

We are plainly in the realm of faith, here. But it is very touching in the decade that follows the Great War to perceive a Zola struggling to impose such a faith and make it reality.

Another of Zola's last projects was to write a novel which treated of Zionism! He had mingled for a moment in the history and destiny of the Chosen People, and this history, this fatality fascinated him. He thought of making a trip to the Near East and describing the idealistic labors of the Jews in their proposed homeland.

At times, Médan wearied him indeed. The care of the great villa bored him, as did the rôle of "great man" which he enjoyed with little grace perhaps. There were some who found him vexing in these last years. Before the young, he often seemed to speak

with his mind's eye fixed upon the bust of Hugo, or Balzac or Voltaire. And yet in other moods he spoke of retiring to some obscure spot, living under some pseudonym, and ending his last days in peaceful labor. But perhaps such wishes, too, reveal an inevitable and pardonable pride. . . .

And finally, other projects suggest a desire to turn at length from the novel, to write a series of national dramas (*La France en Marche*)—a great series—for he thought always in groups, blocks, masses—touching upon all the phases of the national life: The Priest, the Teacher, the Scientist, the Soldier, the Worker, the Peasant. . . . They were to be fables, symbolic, "imbued with action and passion, rather than theory."

Nowhere, at the end, does Zola indicate a sense of fatigue, the hope of terminating his work, of halting at the last and doing nothing!

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The atmosphere of the master's private life had changed little. Returning from the year of exile, spent mostly in the company of Mme. Rozerot, and during which the behavior of his wife had been of a perfectly disinterested courage and loyalty, there had been hope of amelioration. Alexandrine Zola, who, ill and tormented, had waited for him alone in the storm-tossed home of the rue de Bruxelles, now welcomed his return with genuine emotion. Again she occupied by his side the imposing bed-chamber of the Parisian mansion, with its high Louis XIII bed mounted on a dais and fenced off by its grill of an antique grandeur.

But the cruel recriminations began again; the nights were bitter and loud with quarrels. Alexandrine more than ever yielded to her transports, her strange and menacing flights. In Médan, during the summer of 1902, Zola's visits to Verneuil-sur-Seine, the adjoining village where Mme. Rozerot and his children dwelt, were as frequent and as affectionate as ever.

Perhaps it was the unjust rigorousness of those principles

enunciated in *Fécondité* that tormented Mme. Zola more than all other things?

The painful and harassing comedy of the twin households continued a little longer.

The visit of their old friends, the Charpentiers, during this time, with its agreeable diversion, drew the Zolas from the solitude in which they lived. These aged friends of thirty years, whose pecuniary and social support had originally meant so much to the host of Médan, found him in excellent spirits, and recalled even the traces of the old *bonhomie* still surviving upon the thinned and salient visage. As to his health, for he complained occasionally still of mild attacks of the heart, had not a physician, in whose confidence they were, whispered to them, that Zola might well live to the age of 100! . . .

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The death of a hero comes in many ways, in the huge cycle of the *Rougon-Macquart:* innumerably they die, of *delirium tremens*, or slowly on a sick-bed, or suddenly before a firing squad, or violently at the hands of an assassin, or by "spontaneous combustion" even, or they waste away through inanition. . . . But approach life, infinitely, with its unresolved interior dramas, its enigmatic periods; there are tangents in the fate of men of a banal horror, of a supreme triviality, which we scarcely dare to scrutinize steadfastly.

In the last days of September, the Zolas returned as usual to the house in the rue de Bruxelles. It was scarcely known that they had already arrived in Paris.

Early in the night of the 29th of September, Zola and his wife retired, he locking the doors, as was his wont, and all the windows, hermetically, while counting to himself those habitual numbers and motions.

The room has a cosy warmth, this chilly night. A small fire is dying out in the fireplace.

Uneasy slumber, the night draws on interminably; across this oppressed brain pass the hallucinations of a Poe, or a Coupeau in delirium. . . . There seems to be a great weight upon his chest; *a malaise;* he chokes for air. He thinks: "*Ah! and what if I should never awake! . . . I dare not fall asleep. . . .*" So familiar is this agony, that he hesitates to waken his wife. Decades, ages pass. The clock sounds three times. And now the pains in his head have become unbearable. . . . He arises softly and leaves the bed-chamber, for the dressing room. The motion has awakened his wife. She stares with wide eyes through the darkness. He returns, and remains standing beside the bed. "I feel sick. My head is splitting. . . ." "I too, feel upset. *Shall we call the servants, perhaps?*" "No, don't you see the dog is sick too. We are both ill: it must be something we have eaten. It will pass away. Let us not bother them. . . ." his voice terminates in pain. She rises too . . . and returns.

It may have been a few moments later, she awakes again, feeling a terrible sensation through her drowsiness. And there he is, standing beside the bed in the darkness.

"*Emile, Emile, go to sleep! Go back to sleep!*"

He has approached to lie down again, then drunkenly, reeling, without a sound falls to the floor face down beside the dais of the great Louis XIII bed.

And then, as her confused visions recall, she struggles to sit up, to crawl out of bed, to pull the cord that will bring the sleeping servants. But the deadly *carbon monoxide* gas has attained her too! Everything turns round and round. Her voice seems to be strangled in her throat by a great soft hand. She falls back upon her pillow in a swoon. All is silent. The mute, heavy tapestries of the princely bed-chamber hang motionless. . . .

And so they were found in the morning.

The servants disquieted at not hearing a sound, no murmur of the daily ablutions behind the locked door, first call, then pound the door, then hurtle against it and burst it in.

Their master with livid face is stretched on the floor near the bed, and their mistress, deadly pale, is lying upon her pillow. She responds feebly to their first aid; but in the man's purpled face there is death. He, placed some four feet lower than she, had succumbed completely in the dense zone of heavier-than-air coal gas, emitted all night by the blocked chimney. His body is still warm; they try rhythmic tractions of the tongue, swift massaging of the limbs, the body.

Soon the doctors have come in response to the tragic call, the police, the whole Faculty of Medicine. They are many minutes late (one hour and twenty minutes, they estimated). The noxious odor in the room is now scarcely discernible. No measures are of avail. It is all mysterious and incredible.

Mme. Zola, giving unmistakable signs of survival, is hurried off to the Neuilly Hospital.

The news spreads through the city. Special editions are hawked through the streets before the shocked Parisians.

THE ANGEL OF DEATH STRANGLES ZOLA DURING THE NIGHT

screams Drumont's *Libre Parole*. And for the rest, it is simply a Naturalistic *fait divers*. "Zola asphyxiated!" A profound emotion swept through this people, whom the front page of the press had harassed for five years.

Ah, there would have to be an investigation. It all smelt queerly. A thousand rumors ran wild. He had, in the most notable ones, committed suicide out of remorse for his part in the Affair; or because of hard times that were befalling him. The pious crossed themselves and saw the hand of God. And not the strangest rumor of all was one that attributed the death of her spouse to Mme. Zola!

Even in death the man astounded and gripped the nation.

On the morning of the 30th of September, there was a typical mob scene in the rue de Bruxelles, with the disordered activity, interjections, laments of the novelist's choruses.

In the living room, about a long table, under the portraits of Zola and his wife, before the bronze bust of the master already ornate with flowers, a dozen friends breakfasted lugubriously: Bruneau and the illustrator Desmoulins; doctors in white coats, among them the famous Laborde and Larat. The only woman present was Mme. Charpentier, her eyes swollen. There was also Charpentier, whose face was very red. The face of Alfred Bruneau seemed devastated, ravaged. They stand up. They talk.

"What a misfortune! And what a death!" The words are precisely such usual things.

A newcomer arrives, distraught, demands to see the body of his friend.

"But he is opened! . . ." Autopsy. Coroner's inquest.

"And Anatole France? Who is going to write to Anatole France?"

The results of the autopsy have just been announced. No organ in this man of sixty-two was impaired, neither heart nor lungs, nothing save a slight affection of the kidneys, and very little; he should have lived on to—

"How stupid!" exclaims the ill-controlled voice of Mme. Charpentier. "And he dies like that!"

"*How stupid!* . . ." This lament, so accurate, becomes the chorus. "Not to open a window, not to think of opening a *single* window."

"You want to see him? It is horrible! But since you insist. . . ."

Behind a hastily improvised curtain, in the large vestibule downstairs, a great rigid form is lying under a white sheet. The body of Zola upon a table. A kind of lugubrious cabaret upstairs,

where people are eating among the bibelots and objects of art; below, a morgue. . . .

There is the odor of the corpse. Desmoulins lifts a corner of the sheet and "this bloodless head appears, marmoreal, brutal, wilful, but very fine." Its solid brow, its short upturned nose, the mute lips, the stiff hair present a Zola more puissant than ever, as if petrified into a magisterial statue. Superb in his slumbering strength. It is like the great head of some decapitated Huguenot chieftain of an earlier epoch, the blood of the incision under the gray beard suggests this! "This vast brow of so many tumults, passions, words, mobs."

Desmoulins, wretchedly—he was formerly a doctor—taps the great silent head, with a brutal affection.

"The old fellow, poor old fellow, twenty years of friendship gone. . . ."

The sheet is thrown back over it.

In the salon, the footsteps come and go. The burden of the voices.

"How stupid! They only had to open a window and didn't do that! *How stupid!* . . ."

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The burial of a hero: eternal theme for the organ, filling the eyes of the crowds, festooning darkly the visages of the newspapers.

TRAGIC DEATH OF EMILE ZOLA.

MADAME ZOLA DYING.

The bizarre tragedy echoed through the modern world of the twentieth century, which in its barbarous morality regaled itself with pictures of the corpse, of the man in full health, of the stricken widow, who returning from the shadows is now a heroine of the feature columns. It is thus that all the great moments now

drag their way piteously through a metallic net of banalities and journalistic horrors.

In the breathlessness of its surprise the world burst into sorrow with a veritable emotion. Spontaneously, without premeditation, the gigantic plans of a memorable funeral were rushed forward. Two days passed before Mme. Zola, recovering dazedly, could be told. She gave her confused but consistent account. And when she returned in a carriage and stepped down into the rue de Bruxelles, feebly, half-conscious on the arm of a friend, to kiss her husband for the last time, to hold vigil over his fragments, the poignant tableau of all this sent a new thrill of compassion through the crowds.

Immense garlands of flowers came by cablegram from the "French residents of San Francisco," by procession from the miners of Pas-de-Calais, from everywhere. The funeral of a king, with its mass of detail, an epic of some nine days. . . .

The *common people* now recalled him only as their great friend; only the gentler anecdotes were related of his life, of his endless labor, of his heroism in a certain affair concerning which a strange pudor now restricted all mention.

There was, of course, one man in the world, who owed, he felt, perhaps his whole life, perhaps more than his life, to the dead hero. He came to the bier and mourned. On the following night, when he came again to hold vigil, Alfred Dreyfus spoke to Mme. Zola of his duty to attend the funeral, which was to be held on the following Sunday, October 5th. The widow pleaded with him to give up his purpose: there would be manifestations, violence, she feared; perhaps his own life would be endangered, and even those of others. She desired above all that the last ceremony be carried out in peace, free of the bitterly partisan passions of recent days. Zola had always protested that it was as a writer solely, a man of letters, he wished to be remembered. "But they will think me a coward, it is my solemn duty!" Dreyfus had cried. She had insisted, and he had finally, feelingly given his pledge

not to come. But on the eve of the funeral he held vigil again, and, deeply depressed, pleaded with the widow to render him his promise. He could not bear the thought of remaining in his chamber while the last rites over his great defender were being performed. Mme. Zola relented in the end.

The obsequies were, in accordance with the wishes of the deceased, to be non-sectarian. Since the hours of national convulsion were still so near, the police took vigorous measures to avoid all manifestations of a violent, partisan, or, in any way, undignified nature. On the Sunday morning of October 5th, 1902, a crisp, sunny day, over which the washed tranquillity of the Sabbath spread its great hush, a wide cordon of policemen and municipal guards were flung across the streets leading toward 21*bis*, rue de Bruxelles, shutting off effectually these arteries to all persons not provided with an official pass.

All branches of the National and City government were represented. All the windows in the nearby streets were brimming over with the rabble. The huge delegations from socialist locals all over the land, trade unions, popular universities, literary, masonic and libertarian associations, were deflected to the neighboring Place de la Trinité where they stood in a vast crowd, many in their picturesque regional costumes, some ten thousand mourners.

By 12:30, two thousand people were standing before the door of the Zola residence. Anatole France, Bruneau, Desmoulins, the Charpentiers, Joseph Reinach, Théodore Duret, etc., received. Among the notables, who, in full tenure, came now to pay their respects, were academicians, such as Victorien Sardou, former ministers, such as Brisson, royalty, such as the Prince of Monaco, anarchists like Jean Grave, artists like Renoir, novelists like Marcel Prévost. Mathieu Dreyfus, Mme. Alfred Dreyfus, Colonel Picquart, Maître Labori, were also observed to be present: Alfred Dreyfus was nowhere seen. . . .

A detachment from the 28th infantry lent military honors. Two chariots of flowers follow the hearse, which is draped in the

antique arms of the Venetian Zolas. A myriad of heads are uncovered, and there is a great "ah!" as the coffin is borne to the hearse. And now Alfred Dreyfus is distinguished in the first ranks of the mourners, to the murmuring surprise of the multitude, while Mme. Zola is reported confined to her bed again, unable to bear the ceremony. There is, however, little observed, unknown to the public, a lady in full mourning and heavily veiled, who can barely move forward among the principal mourners, upon the arms of her two grown children, a girl of thirteen, and a boy of eleven. The last testament, dating from 1888, had been made known; uncommonly brief, it left all the fortune to the widow; save for some nominal bequests "to friends and to needy relatives. . . ." For this lady there was little solace, and the prospects for her children were of the smallest. . . .

Near the entrance to the historic Montmartre Cemetery, long lines of guards split the procession in two, so as to avoid confusion. Eyewitnesses swear now that fully thirty thousand people followed the cortège!

Along the way there were a few insignificant barks from young incorrigible members of the nationalist bands, who cried:

"To Charenton! Charenton!"

The first speech was by Minister Chaumié, of the Department of Public Instruction, who spoke in the name of the Government:

" . . . The small, the unhappy, the disinherited, upon whose suffering Emile Zola had fastened his attentive and pitying observation, feel that they have lost a great friend . . . mingle their recognition of this and their grief, weep over the immense loss. . . . And it is thus that, followed by a grandiose cortège, amid homage, leaving a glorious name, and imperishable pages, the master of letters enters into the tomb!"

Word had been given to avoid subjects that would be calculated to arouse the multitude.

Abel Hermant, the novelist, and a successor to Zola as President of the Society of Men-of-Letters, then spoke:

"Beside this glorious tomb, before which even literary enmities are not extinguished yet, I long with all my heart to render to Emile Zola a homage worthy of him. . . . Everything of him was disputed, save that he was excessive and colossal. . . . From the painful beginnings, he had accumulated such reserve forces, that later he was no less armed against the pernicious prosperity that came, than he was against salutary poverty.

"Celebrated by the great public. he never flattered her; he never feared her. With a heroic abnegation, he treated his glory cheaply, risked his fortune, gambled his peace, his life. For, in supreme homage to the genius of Emile Zola, I must proclaim his character, above all: he was a conscience, a stubborn conscience, a stoical conscience."

There was a subdued murmur of applause, at the gracefully worded, tactful address of Hermant, who recalled twenty years after, with what a sensation of danger and power they spoke on this day, "the power of unchaining this sea of people for or against them," of how each meaningful sentence "was greeted by a muffled rumble, or by sharp outcries."

A man who had once been an implacable enemy of the dead hero, who had said unbelievably cruel words, and who, older than Zola, had borne upon his own long career, intolerably, the vast shadow of the other man, now spoke. Anatole France, who had also, in the force of his years, known an extraordinary "moral transformation—" for how much more typical of his lifelong skepticism it would have been to remain silent on Dreyfus rather than to fight side by side with the author of *J'accuse!*—it was, then, Anatole France, reconciled by the history of these last years, whom the friends of Zola had asked to speak for them.

It is in the singular record of this man that his words, so habitually insincere, assumed now with all the craft of an oratory that evoked the Augustan period, a solemnity, an exquisite

simplicity that was never again touched by him. He had been in Bordeaux; informed very late, he had had to take a night express; had written his speech with immense fatigue and in the surprise of a veritable emotion before an event which true skeptics contemplate their life long. Short of stature, with his long brown Gallic face, his perfectly white hair, his spectacles, he read from his papers in an unequal voice:

"When we saw rising, stone upon stone, this work whose greatness we measured with surprise, we admired, we were amazed, we praised or we blamed. Praise and blame were carried to extremes with an equal vehemence. . . .

"And the work went on growing larger every day. . . .

"To-day as we see in its entirety the colossal form of it, we recognize also the spirit with which it was filled. It was a spirit of goodness. Zola was good. He had the candor and simplicity of great souls. He was profoundly moral.

"In his last books he revealed completely his fervent love for humanity. He sought to divine and to foresee a better society. This sincere realist was an ardent idealist. His work is only comparable in grandeur to that of Tolstoy. They are two vast ideal cities reared by the lyre, at the two extremities of European thought. They are both generous and pacific. But that of Tolstoy is the city of resignation. That of Zola is the city of work.

"Zola still young had conquered glory. Secure and famous, he tasted the fruit of his labors, when suddenly he tore himself with one stroke from his repose, from the work he loved so much, from all the peaceful pleasures of his life. We must pronounce, over a bier, only grave and serene words, and make gestures only of peace and harmony. But you know, gentlemen, that there is no peace anywhere, save in justice, no repose save in truth. I do not speak of that metaphysical truth, over which the philosophers will eternally dispute. I speak of that moral truth, which we can seize because it is relative, sensitive, in conformity with our nature, and

so near us that a child can touch it with his hand. I shall not betray that justice which bids me to praise that which is praiseworthy. I shall not hide the truth in a cowardly silence. And why remain silent? *Do they, his calumniators, remain silent?* I shall only say that which must be said over this tomb, and I shall say all that must be said."

(A review of the Dreyfus Affair follows, picturing Zola's public action, his struggles, trials, exile and sufferings, as well as the social consequences of his act.)

"Gentlemen, there is only one country in the world in which this great thing could be accomplished. How admirable is the genius of our country! How beautiful is the soul of France, which since centuries past has taught right and justice to Europe and to the world! France is again the land of ornate reason and benevolent thoughts, the soil of equitable magistrature, the country of Turgot, of Montesquieu, of Voltaire, of Malesherbes. Zola has merited well of his country in not despairing of justice in France.

"Let us not sorrow for him because he endured and suffered. Let us envy him.

"Envy him! He has honored his country and the world through an immense work and through a great action. Envy him his destiny and his heart, which made his lot that of the greatest: *he was a moment of the conscience of man!*"

A long ovation followed this elegy. As the rites proceeded now, the colossal funeral became tumultuous. Until nightfall the endless defile of groups and delegations passed the bier and cast flowers upon it, crying:

"Germinal! . . . Germinal! . . ."

Along the broad thoroughfare of the Boulevard de Clichy, the sea of human beings held back by the lines of guards became difficult. Life made a final gesture of violence. In a group of workingmen, one who insisted upon intoning the International was menaced by a mounted officer who finally bore down upon him.

His fellows came to his aid, tore the officer from his horse, brawled with the police, shrieked. Soon the broad, peopled boulevard was a tossing, storm-ridden sea; knots milling, struggling, grappling with each other. There were some broken heads, lacerations. The police charged. The mob scattered and broke in all directions. . . .

EPILOGUE

POSTHUMOUS ADVENTURES: 1902-19—

It became a particularly indisputable fact that the soul of Emile Zola "went marching on. . . ." Accepting the terms and procedure of an outworn dualism we may register the vigorous afterlife of this soul in the periodic struggles and convulsions over the ruins of its body.

But a few weeks after the funeral rites before a multitude of people, a young and impassioned Zolaïst *—and one who has never ceased to observe the cult he vowed himself to, could cry out:

"But Zola is not dead, gentlemen. . . . His thought lives, and I see his influence spreading like unto a great river, which broadens throughout the centuries, the immense angles of its estuary. And this river becomes so vast, and this estuary so incommensurably broad, that it seems to mingle finally with the great flood, the living and immortal flood of the human elements."

On the morrow, Mme. Zola had awakened to the fact of her extremely favored and powerful position, among a hero-worshiping people, and finding this situation quite to her liking, devoted herself to the cult of the glory of her husband for another quarter of a century.

Perverse legends of her cling mysteriously. (The historian observes persistently and with relief that Mme. Zola was a very

* M. Maurice Le Blond, who later became the husband of Denise Emile-Zola.

strange woman among the banal wives of great men!) One is to the to the effect that Mme. Charpentier visited her in the hospital of Neuilly, a day or two after the tragic accident, and heard her ask, not at all in stricken or stupefied tones:

"Is he really dead?"

And thereupon this woman, in whom we must recognize qualities of force as well as oddness, had taken complete charge of all the effects and given herself to the active glorification of her immortal spouse.

She became a patroness of literature, surrounding herself with young men of letters in her home of the rue de Rome, whither she removed with all the relics and souvenirs of Emile Zola from the vast domicile they had so long occupied.

In 1903 she donated all the autographed manuscripts of the *Rougon-Macquart*, together with their notes, as well as those of the three completed Evangelical Novels, to the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris—objects of immense literary and fiscal value, above all valuable in the archaeology of nineteenth century prose fiction.

There was one important exception: the documentary notes for *Docteur Pascal*, bearing reference to Mme. Rozerot, were withheld, and later, under strange circumstances, found their way to the hands of an English collector. In 1915 Mme. Zola (then 75!) formed an attachment for a young *poilu*, whom she befriended and sheltered. This confidant, with her permission, made off with the curious manuscript-notes which mirror Zola's belated love-affair, and indicate Mme. Rozerot as the model for *Clotilde* in the novel. Likewise, all letters before her marriage, with few exceptions, dating from 1864 to 1870, were destroyed.

Manet's superb portrait of Zola was donated to the Louvre, together with a portrait by him of Mme. Zola.* The bust of the

* Apotheosis of a momentary art-critic. Zola, in 1867, was deemed insane when he predicted that Manet would be in the Louvre. There are numerous Manets there now.

author by his old friend Philippe Solari, was placed in the Montmartre cemetery before the family mausoleum, while a reproduction of this was situated in Aix-en-Provence. The city of Zola's childhood acquired also the manuscripts of the "Three Cities," *Lourdes, Rome, Paris.*

Through the efforts of Mme. Zola, and of the Society of the Friends of Emile Zola a monument in bronze was sculptured by Constantin Meunier in 1906. After a long period of waiting in the basement of the *Grand Palais,* it was at length placed with great ceremony in the center of the populous quarter of Grenelle in Paris, at the intersection of the Avenue Emile-Zola, and the rue Violet, on the 15th of June, 1924.

To erect monuments to her husband, to preserve his memory, was Mme. Zola's one object in life now! In another form, the great villa at Médan became a monument to his ideas, when it was ceded to the city of Paris, as an asylum for her foundlings and natural children. In this way the humane compassion of the author of "Fecundity" was perfectly perpetuated!

In December, 1906, the memory of Emile Zola was revived in the newspapers under curious circumstances. A note in the *Journal Officiel's* legal columns ran:

"Mme. Emile Zola, widow, residing in Paris, and acting as guardian of the minors, Denise-Henriette-Jeanne Rozerot, born in Paris, September 20, 1889, and Jacques-Emile-Jean Rozerot, born in Paris, September 25, 1891, requests legal authorization to substitute for the name of Rozerot that of Emile-Zola."

Mme. Zola, widely interviewed, stated her resolution to do justice by the two children of her great husband, in conferring upon them the name of their father, and making them under the law his legal descendants.

The episode, hitherto obscurely known, was celebrated with

great vigor by the press, in which touching articles appeared under titles such as:

MORE THAN A MOTHER!

Le Matin, Dec. 6, 1906: "One day the great producer, the creator that was Zola, suffered at not having created living humanity outside of his books. And without in any way diminishing those sentiments of profound tenderness and immortal attachment (!) to his hearth, he felt the need of the *gynaeceum*, of the nursery, where the complement of his creative faculties might be affirmed. Hence the mysterious *liaison*, long unknown to all, and which the Dreyfus Affair revealed. . . .

"The woman, who in the suburbs of London neighbored the parturition of the first of the Evangelical Novels, "Fecundity," was Mme. Jeanne Rozerot, mother of the novelist's children!

"The wife who today demands for these same children the illustrious name of their natural father, is the noble widow, the faithful companion of years of misery and fortune, whom Zola glorified, queen of his thoughts, but—sterile. . . ."

But this magnanimous action was not all that crowned the prolonged and colorful career of Mme. Zola. For years the votaries of the dead author had been lobbying for the "supreme glorification of Zola," the official transfer of his remains to the vast mausoleum of the Pantheon, where repose magnificently France's great dead. Over the immense corpse of Emile Zola, which assumed more grandeur and mountainousness with every passing year, a merciless struggle raged between the old factions. . . .

Now the Zolaïsts were in power all along the line; the Premier had made the Pantheon affair his personal and party issue—"a work of final rehabilitation and justice. . . ." The measure was voted at last in 1906; but the ceremony did not take place until nearly two years after, on June 5, 1908, and under the most extraordinary circumstances.

The other party, anti-semite-royalist-nationalist, had been reduced to a mere voice, whose frantic appeals for violence aroused only amusement at times. But on the eve of the "translation of

Zola's ashes," the *Action Française,* organ of the new Royalists, bore a manifesto by Léon Daudet which terminated:

Get Zola's corpse out of the tomb!
Bring Dreyfus to the execution block!
Re-establish the Monarchy!

One may tolerate a Léon Daudet, for the added color he may bring to the otherwise drab periods of a Republic; but there is no telling how far his maddened followers may go. And thus it was with foreboding that a company of some thirty people, followers of Zola in life and death, witnessed the removal of his bier from the Montmartre cemetery, to a hearse which accompanied by its defenders took a winding and secret course across the city toward the Pantheon in the Latin Quarter in the night of the 4th of June, 1908. The *camelots du Roi* had met in a fiery mass-meeting, some five or six hundred, and on the alert blocked menacingly the Rue Soufflot and the other main approaches to the great mausoleum. The cortège passed below the Latin Quarter and mounted up the crooked old streets near the St. Geneviève hill to approach the Pantheon from the rear. They had almost gained their objective when a mass of students, yelling and alarming the deserted streets, plunged round a corner and bore down upon them with the full intention of overthrowing the hearse and defaming the bier of the dead hero. The handful of policemen with clubs and drawn revolvers held them off, and it was only after some anxious moments that the bier of Zola reached the Pantheon and was laid squarely under the dome, surrounded by the six monumental marble columns all draped in gold and flowers.

The ceremony took place under the most solemn and official circumstances on the morning of the following day. The government, vexed by the incidents of the previous night, threw thousands of municipal guards about all the streets leading to the Pantheon, cutting them off effectively from all disturbance. The heads of the entire government, the whole diplomatic corps, the army were all assembled. The minister Doumergue made a speech: " . . . What

words would not seem vain, poor and powerless to render him homage. . . . Zola henceforth is above praise. He is now beyond attainment—and among the immortals! . . ." And despite the outcries of Maurice Barrès, of Maurras, of Drumont, even of the hitherto long silent Colonel du Paty de Clam, that the whole ceremony represented the "apotheosis of calumny," the fact was established, as an exultant Zolaïst cried that "in the vast Pantheon, all white and gold, Zola now reposes forever!"

In the great square of the Pantheon, some thirty thousand *cuirassiers* in their gleaming brass helmets and breast-armor stood at attention. The sun dancing and flaming upon this forest of metallic apparel, such as is no more seen in France, made a lovely if sinister picture that filled the eye.—And what would Zola have exclaimed at such a military ovation, he the pacifist author of *La Débâcle!*—A military band played the funeral dirge, and Beethoven's Eroica Symphony. The affair would soon be over peacefully and Zola solemnly consecrated with all official honors for posterity.

In the front ranks of the celebrants stood the Zola family, Mme. Zola, the children, Denise (and her husband, Maurice le Blond), Jacques, Mme. Rozerot, the Clemenceaus, the Fasquelles, Bruneau and the other friends. Nearby stood also Alfred Dreyfus, with his wife, his children, and his brother Mathieu.

And at this moment, a little man, who might have been a character of the old Latin Quarter, created a flurry in the crowd by pushing his way determinedly toward the group. Maurice le Blond, the son-in-law of Zola, who was standing directly behind Major Alfred Dreyfus, heard a dry click like the scraping of a match; he wheeled about—and so did Dreyfus, happily, at the moment, throwing up his arm—and saw this little man holding a tiny drawn revolver which played a small blue flame toward Dreyfus. *Pam-pam-pam!* Le Blond, who was a huge fellow, threw himself upon the man, knocked him down and held him by the throat. Outcries! Police, the crowd, surged toward the wretch, who was

torn from Le Blond's grasp and immolated under a rain of fierce blows. Mathieu Dreyfus, among them, saved the would-be-assassin from summary death. But as for Alfred, he stood, very pale, very calm, holding one arm up from which blood dripped. He smiled, although as if in some pain, to those who rushed to him. It was only a flesh wound. But all the hearts of those present were torn at the thought of this premeditated assassination, surrounded by his family, his children! Grégori, the woeful little assassin, an old journalist, deemed feeble-minded, his head utterly turned by reading certain jingoist provocators, was not seriously punished.

Soon, the newspapers were hawking about the streets:

DASTARDLY ATTEMPT ON ALFRED DREYFUS!

And at the sortie from the square of the Pantheon, after the crowds had defiled before the great bier of Zola, there had been scenes. Vehicles containing government officials issuing from the rue Soufflot, had been stopped at the corner of the Boulevard St. Michel, and attacked by bands of *camelots du Roi* and students. The municipal guards came to the rescue; bands of manifestants were trapped in narrow streets, and putting up vigorous resistance, fought and broiled with the police all afternoon long of the 5th of June. There were broken heads, there were hundreds of arrests. . . .

❦ ❦ ❦

Jeanne Rozerot died on May 23, 1914, at Rouvres-sous-Mailly (Côtes d'Or). Madame Emile Zola died April 26, 1925, at the age of eighty-six, having completed her long and successful campaign to apotheosize officially her husband.

But independently of the hero-worshiping impulses of France, so plainly marked, the ghost of Emile Zola labored ceaselessly through his books. Having addressed always the people—although he never flattered them—through the simplicity and power of his

conceptions, the works of Emile Zola continued to sell with increasing momentum. During the World War *La Débâcle* was read on an immense scale again by the men of the trenches. In 1925, M. Maurice Le Blond, speaking for the Zola family, announced that over 2,500,000 copies of the novels had been sold in the French language alone. No calculation is possible of the numberless authorized or pirated translations in nearly every language under the sun.

In the more than fifty years elapsed since *L'Assommoir*, an army of imitators and disciples sprang up not only in France, but notably in Russia, Germany, Scandinavia, England, and latterly America. Of these, the more important groups, such as that of Wells-Bennett-Galsworthy in England, Hauptmann, Suderman, Heinrich Mann in Germany, could claim their influences to be anterior to Zola, that is, harking from Balzac and Flaubert. But it was Zola who had revived Balzac, intrepidly, and made universally known those theories of Flaubert, which the creator of *Madame Bovary* himself renounced! It is the familiar case of the follower of pathfinders peopling the discovered terrain. It was in the Zola of the middle period that the paramount principle of *exact observation* took form in works of almost unprecedented scope and power. One could point, among many cases, to those whose suggestion proceeded in the most direct line: most notably, Thomas Mann, the German master, who in his "Buddenbrooks" cycle was drawn to painting the rise and fall of a family; and above all to the late Marcel Proust, who incorporating, as well, Huysmans' and Goncourt's proposal that Naturalism apply its methods henceforth to the study of the milieux of culture, carried to completion his epic, "*A la Récherche du Temps Perdu.*"

What was most amusing to observe in the generation that followed Zola was the persistence of the type-novel he had perfected, probably, more than any other writer of his time. Less new, less

powerful, less universal, a Henry Bordeaux, a Marcel Prévost, a Barbusse, a Dorgélès, a Romain Rolland, duplicated his work, and were often crowned with official honors long inaccessible to the originator. In another sense, the *unanimistic* school, led by Jules Romains, confined itself largely to the crowd studies such as Zola had made with intuition in *Germinal* and *La Débâcle*. But saddest of all were the host of cheap followers who filled the newspapers with their sensational "Naturalism," repeating *ad nauseam* the most facile, the most obviously offensive aspects of the Zola *opera*. It was thus, then, that the type-novel of action, setting, character, vivified with exact observation, which had been most completely exploited by Zola, came into its decline.

The currents of literature began at length to move away from Naturalism. Artists of the first rank were no longer drawn by its principles. The hypertrophied analysis of men who were originally under—one almost thinks—the *pall* of Zola, men like Marcel Proust, André Gide, James Joyce, moves now toward the eternal "mystery of the self," toward the romanticism, in more extreme exponents, of language. The preoccupation (of a Zola in his prime) with making these experiences "living," above all, precise, is scarcely abandoned; but in the new directions assumed, one sees only in the rarest and briefest instances that "energy" which is an eternal quality of great art; that combative vigor, that sheer *puissance*, which was the most signal and unforgettable trait of Emile Zola.

THE END

APPENDIX

ZOLA'S TECHNIQUE: THE METHODS AND PLANS

In the second half of the nineteenth century the methodology of the Naturalistic novel was perfected in passing from the hands of Balzac to Flaubert to Zola. This form of literature, which assumes as its function, the presenting of men as part of a social environment, and believes in the action and reaction of man (scientifically studied) upon society, or vice versa, has lasted until the present day. No longer fashionable in Europe, the method is still exploited by writers of considerable energy, but moderate talent or imagination, such as Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis in America.

To go back some time in the large movements of thought, it must be recalled that during the French Revolution, Science was worshiped popularly, even vulgarly, as the new Goddess, and it became unfashionable to go to Church in France during the 1790's. The intellectuals of this period were skeptics or unbelievers who enjoyed tearing the veil from old illusions up to the end of the Second Empire, in 1870.

Now George Sand, a most typical, romantic novelist of the early nineteenth century, would start with a blank sheet of paper and the first idea that entered her head and fare forth for from 300 to 500 pages upon a lyrical flight. This was plainly little calculated to hold long the interest of the intellectuals of the time who were beginning to read Darwin and Comte and Taine.

Balzac, it is well known, proceeded from observation of life; but his whole work was a defense of the idea of monarchy and authority, Catholicism in short. He could be gross and skeptical—but only at the expense of human nature itself, only to dismay it; he had no belief, moreover, in the "scientific function" of the novel to arrest him from his prodigious digressions.

With Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* came, as Zola saw, the crystallization of the realistic method. But no sooner does he invent the social novel than Flaubert abandons and even repudiates it.

Thus it is Zola who takes over the novel, and establishes, demarcates, campaigns for it, in the modern form which is to be followed for a half

century after him. In the atmosphere of his time, one could not write in the manner of Hugo or George Sand. One could not curse progress, socialism, railroads, like Flaubert. He felt through his own development that his effort was part of the march of humanity toward the millennium. . . . This millenium we shall reach of course by exact knowledge of people and their social behavior, by exposing corruption or vice, ridiculing idiocy. How stubbornly the modern Naturalists have clung to such illusions!

(One sees also a parallel tendency in the last century, from Stendhal to André Gide, which moves apart from the main torrent; this tendency may be said to occupy itself with the *poetics* of the human consciousness, to the exclusion of truth or progress; it is having its day now, in all probability.)

At any rate, for Zola, the novel had to become an honorable rather than a fanciful trade. He was through with Inspiration! He could work like a good bourgois. . . . We know of course that only through his lyrical or personal qualities did his works escape from becoming an immense and boring *fatras*——

I have thought it would be of great actual interest to set down here Zola's method of working, and the sketch or plan of a typical novel.* Thus any person of moderate energy may emulate the celebrated system (in lieu of taking corespondence courses); whereas for persons of imagination the social novel as a form of literature might conceivably fall into desuetude. . . .

1) Zola would pretend that he was incapable of devising a "plot." Believing man to be a product of his environment and his hereditary descent, he would proceed from his general idea or thesis, *viz.*, the oppression of the working class, to studies of this milieu.

"He would begin to work over his novel without worrying about the plot, without knowing what episodes would take place, what characters would play a part, or what the beginning or the end would be."

So he related to his friend and compatriot of Aix, Paul Alexis.

He would meditate only on the personality he had chosen from his genealogical tree of Rougons and Macquarts; for this purpose he would surround himself with all documents capable of informing him or suggesting ideas. "There were three sources of information: books which related to the past; testimony, either through written works or conversation, by persons at hand, or experts; and finally direct personal observation, by himself, on the field of action."

* I have translated part of the printed version of the Notes for *L'Assommoir*, as prepared and annotated by M. Henri Massis in his: *Comment Zola écrit ses romans.*

For each novel, "I would surround myself with a whole library on the subject treated; I would have competent persons talk to me, whenever they could be approached; I would travel, see the horizons of this subject, its people, its morals." *

He would take notes himself, during his expeditions, faces of people, scenes glimpsed, bits of dialogue, all such things as might later furbish up his memory.

Then from this moment on he would begin to think only of his novel and set aside all the things which were inessential to the actual work. All documents were classified in folios, pigeonholed under special legends and labeled by him with great care.

This was the first part of his labor, and he called it "the constitution of a portfolio."

In the matter of documentation, it is interesting to compare Zola to Flaubert, as well.

"Flaubert proceeded only from notes whose exactness he had been able to verify himself," Zola wrote of the older novelist. "In order to write ten pages, dealing with farm-workers, for instance, he would not recoil before the labor of reading twenty or thirty volumes on the question, and he would question every one of any competence on such matters; he would go to the extent of visiting fields of cultivation. If he needed a description he would visit the scene himself, live there. . . . Each detail provided a continual concern for the real. . . . He seemed to permit nothing to be owing to his imagination. When he wrote he would weigh every word dispassionately. It was as if he wanted to place his feet only upon terrain which he knew, to advance thence amid a conquered land. . . ." †

2) Up to this point, Zola had acted as an honorable and conscientious savant; he had been questing. But now he is in the stage of conception, and here as Flaubert said, "*il faut se foûter de la conscience.*"

Zola now composes a "Sketch," in which he reasons with himself and "writes down his soliloquies word by word as they come to him." He puts down everything as it goes through his head, without art or orthography; he indicates the general idea which must govern the novel, and moves from deduction to deduction, logically, toward the particular; from the social class, he takes groups; the groups become individuals, by stages in his sketch, and the *fabulation* or chain of events begins to shape itself vaguely about these characters.

Once Zola has got some sufficiently clear ideas as to his plot, in general, he passes on to his characters. He establishes the civil status of each one of them, records his actions in the past: career, age, health, physical

* Emile Zola: "Les droits du romancier." *Figaro,* June 6, 1896.
† Emile Zola: *Les Romanciers Naturalistes: Gustave Flaubert.*

aspect, temperament, habits, relations, as if he were a criminal court judge. The conduct of such a character in his novel is hence determined.

The plan of the novel remains open in the meantime. And the portfolio grows in size, amassing through its new turns or requirements, ever more material, more excursions even, further references to field notes, already taken, which are now seen from the angle of the characters and the action he roughly proposes to treat with. His labor has become more selective; but by now he has "a whole mass of data, carefully classified," and often two or three times the size of his long two-volume novels.

3) It is then that Zola makes the plan of his book, chapter by chapter.

"He moves by successive stages. (Alexis.) He elaborates his *Sketch*, arranging each of its principal facts in their proper place in the novel. In the same fashion he distributes his characters: here giving the physical portrait of the character, there a salient trait of his nature; further on, the decisive state of mind to which he desired to conduct him. He empties each portfolio, thus. Everything must take its precise place; the quarter, the house, the locations of the big scenes . . . all balanced and distributed according to the exigencies of the narrative and the situation. By now he has developed the broad lines of his plan.* But it is still in the rough. That is, into each chapter the matter to be therein contained is thrown pell-mell, as he empties his portfolios. Thus before he begins to write he is obliged to make what he calls a 'definitive plan' or scenario of each chapter, which he derives from the 'primitive' plan and all the amassed data, and combines in the order necessary to the development of each action. It is as if he stopped before setting in motion the march of an act of a drama, for which he had only the materials ready."

4) And now only the most agreeable part of the work remains to be accomplished: the "editing" of the novel.

"He goes at it calmly, methodically. He writes four manuscript pages every day, almost without crossing out a word. And once he has written them he lays them aside and never looks at them until he sees them printed."

And now let us make an effort to see the theorist at work. Let us examine the plans, sketches and notes for one of his novels. We may de-

* A veritable chess game, as the reader perceives! But there are chess-players and chess-players. What part the work of intuition, or imagination, or hazard, takes in this "planning" Zola, and in fact, nobody else as yet clarifies us upon; the hunting up a happy or glittering plan, required evidently for Zola such a discipline as our present day habits tend to reject.

de for ourselves what part is played by method and observation, what art by intuition.

For this purpose I have selected the manuscript of *L'Assommoir,* one f the most celebrated, and most characteristic of the novels of his aturalistic period. It is also the one in which Zola's plans achieved the most success.

The manuscript of *L'Assommoir,* in two octavo volumes, lies in the ational Library at Paris (Nouvelles Acq. fr. 10270-71). The first volume ontains the final ms; the second contains the portfolio, some 239 pages ivided as follows:

1) A general summary plan (pp. 1-3).
2) Detailed plan (4-92).
3) Notes on alcoholism (93-99).
4) The quarters, streets, cabarets, dance-halls (plans and notes, 99-16).
5) The Characters (117-138).
6) Notes taken from Denis Poulot's *Le Sublime* (140-155).
7) The Sketch (156-174).
8) Notes on public laundries, laundresses, workers, coopers, goldmiths (175-190).
9) Diverse information—Newspaper clippings—Slang (191-239).

Impossible to cite or translate all of these documents here. We must ull what can be most illuminating.*

It is all a vague idea, as found in the outline submitted to his first ublisher, Lacroix.

Six years later he sets to work on this plan (1875), and there is a ewspaper clipping anent child-beating, whose substance is to go into is novel. There are many others of a like nature. He has a good deal f material. He begins to formulate this, to grope about for his direction.

Like Balzac, Zola usually had no "sudden and happy inspiraions."

His nature was obscure, troubled, complex. He did not arrive at the nd "save by degrees, stopping often in mid-career." That he must needs truggle with his own temperament, "by dint of infinite patience, and espite a thousand fruitless approaches or skirmishes, through the triumphant power of his will," is to be seen from the "Notes."

* The very first notes appear to have been written toward 1869, when Zola as living near the workers' quarter of les Batignolles. It was merely a project or a novel about working people, citing great feasts he had seen, in which they nvite the whole street, and spend all their money—women leading their husbands ack from saloons—political agitation among workers, etc.

THE SKETCH *

[*Zola first indicates the general idea, the ruling thought which is to rule his novel.*]

The novel should do this: show the poor people's quarter and explain through their milieu the customs of the poor, as for example, drunkenness, the breakdown of the family, fights, submission to all the shame and misery arising from the very conditions of the workman's existence, hard work, promiscuity, indifference, etc. In a word, a very exact picture of the life of the people with its foulness, its loose life, its vulgar language, and this picture having as background—without presenting a thesis—the particular soil in which all these things grow. Do not flatter the worker, nor blacken his character. An absolutely exact reality. At the end the moral standing out inevitably. A good worker to play the opposite part, or rather no, don't fall into the *Manual*. A frightful picture which will carry its own moral lesson.

[*Then he talks to himself about his principal character, whose story he retraces.*]

My Gervaise Macquart is to be the heroine. I make of her the woman of the people, the wife of a workman. It is her story I tell. This is her story. She quits Plassans to go to Paris with her lover Lantier, by whom she has two children: Claude and Etienne. She leaves in 1850. At that time she is twenty-two years old. Claude is eight and Etienne four.

Lantier, a tanner, abandons her three months after her arrival in Paris, where she has taken up her work as laundress again: he marries some one else, probably. She goes to Coupeau, a roofer, who marries her. She has a daughter by him right away, Anna, in 1851. I free her of Claude when he is about ten or twelve. I leave her only Etienne and Anna. At the opening of the story, Anna must be at least fourteen and Etienne eighteen years old. The drama will then take place toward 1865. I shall relate previously the life of Gervaise.

As my framework I shall probably be able to take the life of a

*. . . I use my reasoning power," says Zola. "I argue with myself, I write monologues word for word just as they occur to me and so that read by another they would appear very strange. So-and-so does this or that; what would be the natural result of such an action? Would such-and-such an act affect my character? Assuredly. It is therefore logical that this other character would react in a given way. Then some other character may intervene, at a certain point; someone whom I have discovered in my researches and who seems absolutely to belong to the setting. . . . I examine the immediate consequences of the slightest incident. . . . I work as does a commissary of police. . . ."

woman of the people. I take Gervaise at Paris, twenty-two years old (in 1850) and I follow her until 1869, when she is forty-one. I make her pass through all the crises and shame imaginable. Finally I kill her in a tragedy.

[*If the reader will now turn to Zola's completed work, he will perceive that Gervaise is not "killed in a tragedy." Zola's first instinct is to have something sensational happen to end her. The after-thought, however, wins the day: to have nothing exaggerated; to have Gervaise descend gradually and pass from life as naturally as an old tree which has been beset by the elements, and little by little is brought to the ground. Such a solution (in the 1870's) is the more original, after all the romantic and melodramatic balderdash we have been getting; it is in the Naturalistic mood.*]

To begin with, then, I shall have the following phases of existence:

Arrival in Paris in 1850—abandoned by Lantier, Gervaise remains alone with two children, one eight, the other four years old. (The scene of the abandonment, the children, etc.)

The meeting with Coupeau, somewhere; typical; (Coupeau knows that she lived with Lantier). The marriage (typical also). The early days of the family. The first adjustments.

The success of Gervaise, who finally establishes herself. A little laundry shop beside her former mistress. The rival's jealousy leading to a tragic dénouement. [*This idea changed.*]

Life in the little shop. Coupeau no longer works. The workwoman.

Reappearance of Lantier. Details on tanners (La Bièvre Quarter). Extraordinary life of the lover in the family. Coupeau broken down, drinking. Lantier explaining: "The children are mine, no? I can come and embrace them, can't I?" Or better still, Coupeau brings him. An old friend. Then, little by little, the two men begin to live off Gervaise. Show her resisting at first, then letting herself go little by little.

Then follows the slow ruin of the little shop. Gervaise is obliged to go to work again for other people, after having lost her clientèle one by one. Coupeau pawns other people's laundry, etc. When Gervaise works out, sordid misery, days without bread.

There is the drama to end on. I make Gervaise die tragically, or rather I show her dying at forty-one, exhausted with work and misery.

Gervaise must be a sympathetic figure. Formerly at Plassans, her mother made her drink anisette, and she became pregnant by Lantier at fourteen. Explain these beginnings. She is by temperament yielding and passionate; that will do as a fault. As for drunkenness, she drank because her mother used to drink. But at bottom she is a sodden beast, devoted like her mother. She is an exact reproduction of "Fine" (her

mother) at the moment of conception (later, even, I have her grow fat like her mother). She is lame, slightly, do not forget. Then, at Paris, I have a new Gervaise. She drinks no longer, she loves Lantier, she devotes herself to her children. With all that, she must have a decided character or I shall be too dull. At first, as I said, a sodden beast for work; then, a tender nature, an excellent woman, whom education might have developed, but who is lost. Each of her qualities turn against her; work breaks her down, her tenderness leads her to extraordinary weaknesses. One can give her material longings by giving her an ideal. In the beginning, she says: "I should like a little corner where I might be happy, see my children well settled. Eat bread every day, not be beaten. Die at home, etc." On the whole give her those modest desires that will never be realized.

I cannot escape from the banality of the intrigue save by the size and truth of my pictures of the people. Nothing exceeds that in importance. As long as I am taking the bestial, drab, filthy side of life, I must give it in great relief. The subject is poor. I must therefore give it such verisimilitude that it will be a miracle of exactness.

[*What of his dual nature, as Flaubert had observed, he must goad himself all the time to be a Naturalist, to struggle for such exactness as will astound the reader. This is undoubtedly a cardinal principle of Naturalism, as distinguished from the realism of a Flaubert, or of the forgotten Champfleury. It is the reason for the greater attraction he exerted upon Huysmans and Maupassant.*

He now ponders over the secondary characters who are to fill out the picture.]

The secondary characters must help me complicate the story.

These characters are:

Bijard, his daughter and the two children. Bijard, bad workman, painter, perhaps (to be found).

Goujet, a smith (give him a mother). Muscular effort, a handsome fellow, a trifle somber, loving Gervaise. Use him at the end; good workman.

Lorilleux, Parisian workman, engaged in very fine work, seated all day long. Nasty. Married Mme. Lorilleux, sister of Coupeau.

An old workman (*Père Bru*) seventy years old, a drama.

Then women.

Gervaise's mistress, Mme. Fauconnier, with her employees, Eugénie, Lise, etc.

A widow (elder sister of Coupeau), working at something or other.

The janitor of the house.

Coupeau's mother, incapable of working any longer, whom Gervaise takes in and who dies (death among the workers).

I shall make most of these people live in the same house. Some, however, outside; that will give me a thread to follow. I must add a fruiterer, a coal merchant, and a few other small retailers. Very definite characters, Bijard, Goujet, Lorilleux.

[*He warns himself further:*]

If I take as title "The Simple Life of Gervaise Macquart," the character of the book must have exactly that simplicity; a story of magisterial nudity, day to day reality, going in a straight line, no complications, very few scenes and those extremely commonplace, absolutely nothing romantic nor affected. Facts placed side by side, but giving the *entire life of the people.*

In the house live the following persons: Gervaise, Coupeau, Lantier, Coupeau's mother, Anna, the Lorilleux, the Bijards, Goujet and his mother, the aged workman (Bazouge), the janitress (Mme. Boche), a wine merchant.

The following persons live elsewhere: the laundress, Mme. Fauconnier, the elder sister of Coupeau, a widow, Mme. Levat; a grocer, whose husband is a policeman, the coal vender.

[*Only now does Zola devote himself to the intrigue that is to link these characters together and explain the milieu.*]

This is how the episodes could be arranged. My first scene in a washing-house. The abandonment of Gervaise dramatized with the aid of some of the other characters.

The first meeting of Gervaise and Coupeau; Coupeau to be a friend of Lantier. He brings Gervaise to see his family, the Lorilleux. That is where I shall describe the house where all the characters live (especially the Lorilleux). . . . A word about Bijard; little Josephine must be very young. . . .

Gervaise has a shop in the laundry, in the place of some shop-keeper who has left. She takes the mother of Coupeau with her. Then the return of Lantier. Quarrels, escapades, parties. The whole family at a meal.

Show the three men, Lantier, Coupeau and Goujet around Gervaise. When Gervaise is cleaned up, show the death of Mme. Coupeau. The whole family chipping in for the burial. Important episode. Return to Bijard. . . .

Misery of Gervaise. She goes to see Coupeau at the hospital. Her presentiment that she will die there. She leaves the shop. Winter; unemployment, the pawn-shop.

A drama between the three men?

Third picture of the Bijards. Death of the little girl, exhausted. The end: death of Gervaise; Lantier goes away, Goujet, etc. . . .

[*The whole drama is as yet quite vague in the first "sketch" for L'Assommoir. None of the threads are bound up; none of the events have the* inevitability *that he wishes to give them. He is worrying now about how to give it all a unified and overwhelming movement. And then the idea comes to him: "I must show the whole world trying to bring about her ruin, consciously or unconsciously."*]

The drama at the end must be considered above all. I must use all the characters in it, above all her relatives, the Poissons and the Boches. Gervaise must remain the principal, the central character, and I must show the whole world trying to bring about her ruin, consciously or unconsciously.

Debts are necessary at first. In order to feed herself and her idle husband in addition, she has to borrow on all sides—from the butcher, the baker, the coal-merchant, the grocer, etc. Then pushed to her limit, I can show her descending to street-walking. Finally, to make the drama more terrible, I can have her made pregnant again (she thinks of suicide).

A banal drama among the people, some scene of brutal jealousy that finishes with a play of knives. So; there might be a battle between Lantier, Coupeau, and Goujet, pushed on one another by the other characters. . . .

[*Zola thinks of various lurid resolutions: Gervaise, enceinte, will discover her old lover* in flagrante, *cast vitriol on him and the other woman, and die herself of a kick in the stomach! Such a dénouement would make a good case for Zola as a "repressed" sadist. But Zola is a "balanced" neurotic. He sees that an episode of this kind would have a rather "classical" character. And then how would he keep Gervaise "sympathetic"? He relents then, and gropes for a more "banal" solution, while hoping to keep it powerful and full of relief. . . .*]

But I wish to keep the simplicity of facts themselves, stay in the main current of common life, while remaining dramatic and very touching. . . .

[*He considers shifting the character of various personages, for reasons of utility: Gervaise must have a rival, the big Adèle, with whom she will have the famous fight in the public laundry, in the very first chapter, and with whom Lantier runs away. But then in order to keep Adèle a rival throughout the book, he decides to have her sister the inamorata of Lantier, and Adèle merely fighting Gervaise over her sister. In this way the person who evokes Gervaise's opposition remains in the quarter*

while Lantier runs away and disappears with the other woman. The opening scene of the fight in the public laundry between the two women, occurring to him by chance, becomes a tremendous episode and symbolic of the lonely fight of Gervaise against the whole world about her.

Zola now turns to politics. The bavardage among the workers. He distributes political opinions. Lantier, the villain, has the most radical opinions of all; he is a fake. But still there is a vast discontent among the people. Workingmen give their harassed women children, one upon another!]

Later on in another novel I must study this whole situation in a more complete manner. [*Germinal,* 1885.] But the novel of Gervaise must deal chiefly with the morals of the common people.

[*This is the end of the first, crude "Sketch." Nothing is as yet in its proportion, nothing is in its place, when we refer to the finished text of the novel. The plot suggested above is still to be abandoned in favor of another, which shapes itself in the "Plan" or Scenario of the individual chapters.*

Zola now goes on to elaborate the characters. Each of them is distinguished by a salient, a dominant trait. His psychology is broad or coarse rather than delicate. His portfolios are like a police record, containing all but the thumb-print. These people are seldom complex; they are always a single impulse, a single force of resistance or sympathy. They must be this, in view of the deductive method with which Zola works from the general group to the individual. He lists some thirty-five characters, beginning with Gervaise, and moving through the principal and secondary characters.]

Gervaise, born in 1828, twenty-two years old now. Limps slightly, owing to brutalities her mother had borne from drunken husband. Tall, with a pleasant round face; her infirmity is almost a grace. At fourteen she has her first child through Lantier. They escape to Paris together. Three months later, when she is abandoned, she has two children, Claude and Etienne. She goes to work courageously. In short, she is to be an average person, who would have made an excellent wife; she takes life seriously, loves her children, asks only not to be beaten, etc. By heredity, she is much like her mother, a beast of toil, devoted; some natural weaknesses; she is like a thing thrown into the air, to fall by chance head or tail. *Her environment will determine her lot.*

[*The other characters are studied in more or less detail in the same wise. Bits of action are attached to them. Their possible rôles are demarcated. It is a terribly important part of the preparation. But there is no*

space here for all of it, and the studies and descriptions of milieux *are even more characteristic.*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

[*Zola believed with Taine that man could not be separated from his social environment; that he left his imprint, "upon his external life, his house, his furniture, his business, his gestures, his speech." To express all, one must explain the "multitude of effects, and at the same time one must assemble the whole multitude of causes." And so Zola arrived at his theory that description in the novel must represent "the state of environment which determines and completes the man."*

He therefore wanders about the quarter he has selected for his study, which is to be the determining environment of his subjects.

Here is a street, such as he is seeking:]

La rue Neuve-de-la-Goutte-d'Or. The street slopes downhill from about the middle of its length; narrow; sidewalks missing in places; gutters always running soapy water.

From the end, on the side of the rue de la Goutte d'Or, descending. At the right, dark shops, rope makers, coopers, to the left, dry-goods, musty grocers; (shops shut and pasted up with advertisements). Then in the middle, the houses become lower, a single story, stinking water. There, to the right, the washing-house; body of the building small, dominated by three large cylinders and a zinc reservoir; the steam machine to the right, the office to the left, the entrance and the passage to the washing-house in the middle; above, the drying room with its shutters. Beyond the washing-house, a beautiful red-brick house, a tree (acacia) extending its branches into the street; the gaiety of the street. Across the way a factory of seltzer water; and beyond that, a livery stable, Louise. Then, at the end of the street along the exterior boulevard, four or five laundresses, of whom one has a handsome shop. Opposite, little shops, a barber with brass bowl hanging outside. The low houses are painted yellow, green, red, blue, fences, etc.

[*Here is even the big grimy house, in which he will lodge all his characters, such a tenement as the one in which he himself lived as a youth, next door to an undertaker:*]

Rue de la Goutte d'Or. Toward the rue des Poissoniers, thickly populated; in the other direction, provincial. My big house (between two little ones) is near the rue des Poissoniers, five or six houses away. It is eleven windows across and six stories high; all black, in one block, no sculpture; windows with black shutters crumbling, and with pieces missing.

The door in the middle, immense, arched. At the right, a huge wine shop with a room for the workmen; at the left the coal vendor's shop, painted, a parrafin shop and the shop that Gervaise will have and where there is now a fruit vendor. Entering through the passage, the gutters flow with water; in the middle, a great square court, enclosed; the janitor to the right (the tap is beside the lodge). The four sides with their six stories; bare, pierced by black windows without shutters. Below, shops all about, carpenters, a locksmith, a dyeing establishment always sending out tinted water. Four staircases, A B C D, one for each side of the building. Within, long corridors on each floor, with uniform doors painted yellow. In front, in the flats with shutters, live people who pass for rich. In the court, none but workmen; wash hanging on lines. There is a sunny side and a side where the sun never shines, darker and damper. The court is paved; the place around the tap is damp. The raw daylight falls into the court.

Opposite the house, a blacksmith's shop; a large gray wall without a window, a gaping door in the middle, shows a court filled with wagons, buggies, their shafts in the air. There is also a forge; one can hear the rumbling of the bellows and see the glow of the furnace; on the wall, horseshoes painted black, arranged in the form of a pan. To the right and left of the door, little booths, holes with a painted front; a junk-shop; "*à la bonne friture*"—a watchmaker (We repair clocks and watches); cuckoo clocks going in back of the hole, in the window; watches in silver cases; before the little counter, full of tiny utensils and delicate things under glass, a gentleman in a frock coat, well dressed, who works continuously. (The image of fragile things, in the midst of the noise and movement of the life of the people.)

[*He stops to regard people passing him in the street, takes out his notebook and writes:*]

THE PEOPLE ON THE BOULEVARD

Many women bare-headed; some with caps, many with net bags; vestees, aprons, loose skirts hanging straight. A band of children with runny noses, some of them clean, many of them dirty. Games, skip rope, etc. Women seated with infants in their arms, nursing. Clean working-girls, almost coquettes; baskets, packages, knitted bags. Workers in smocks, blouses, jackets; some carrying tools, others with swinging arms; some carry children. Women shopping for dinner. Carriages, vans returning empty. Omnibuses and cabs later. . . .

Man with a ladder. Children playing in a pile of sand. Women, hatless, running home to dinner, their baskets on their arms; little girls

with loaves of bread. Men talking aloud to others, walking fast. Workmen. Women with children. Men with working tools; in jacket and cap, smoking or not, running or stopping. Masons in wagons. Carts, barrels, plaster not emptied out, trucks. Paris lighting its gas-lamps. The sky. Hands in pockets. . . . Men alone or in groups. Painters with their paint-pots. Men dragging carts along by means of straps over their shoulders. Belts.

[*Voluminous descriptions of streets, shops and houses follow.*

And now Zola devotes himself to the study of the trades; for this is an integral part of the "environment". He takes precise notes on the labors of the laundress, the goldsmith, the cooper, the blacksmith. There is moreover a quantity of notes on special questions, such as "Alcoholism," which enter into his domain. Thus the illness and death of Coupeau are the "textual reproduction of clinical observations made at the Ste. Anne Hospital in Paris." "It is above all the doctors whom I have abused," he wrote. "I have never treated a scientific question or discussed a disease without putting the whole faculty to work for me."—Emile Zola, Les Droits du Romancier, op. cit.]

ALCOHOLISM

First indications in Coupeau. Merry tipsiness at first, good appetite, indistinct nightmares. Mucous discharge, loss of appetite, loss of sleep; slight trembling of the hands, itching, etc. Sticking sensation all over the skin, especially on the hands and feet, abnormal feeling of cold and warmth, cramps; weakness of the legs and trembling of the hands. Heaviness and slowness of the head. Occasional blindness, rumbling in the ears, extreme surprise, vertigo.

First illness. Swelling. He is sent to Sainte-Anne. Alcoholic delirium, short and rapid; his hands alone tremble. At the end of two or three days, he laughs at his nightmares; but fear conquers him in the evening, when night falls and he is put to bed. Sleep builds him up, abstinence cures him.

Finally, the great crisis, the big scene preceding death. Place the time at night, the disease strengthened by excessive drinking. The whole delirium tremens. . . .

Injection into the eyes, sweat, alteration of features. Fever of 104°. Disordered movements, very serious. Trembling of face and entire body accompanied by jumps, shudders, and twitching muscles, even during sleep. Suffering of the marrow, when a hand is placed on the body. Continued and generalized labor of the body. Wavy movement under the skin. Finally weakening of the muscles, beginning of paralysis. The body soaked with alcohol.

Four days of cries and trembling. The straightjacket. Padded cell.

Portrait of the victim to be used; at first whirrings, ringings and whistlings in the ears, confused rings, bells, cries, tumultuous voices. The light is troubled, dimmed, pictures seen in a cloud. Sparks, flames, shadows, animals, devils that grow larger and smaller, changing color. Talkative, incoherent, diffuse; he believes the physicians are working against him. He smells rats, sulphur; food seems to contain vitriol, the tea smells of whiskey or wine. Mad, agitated crying, bawling, perspiring. He believes himself covered with vermin, animals under his skin, worms that he tries to shake off. He also believes himself tied in iron bands and tries to escape from them; he feels a cold wet thing creeping along his thighs. . . . Gervaise is present at the agony. Finally the trembling spreads over the entire body. Stiffness of the neck, the face in a grimace, both eyes turned to the right, a little foam on his lips. He can no longer stand upright, he seats himself on the bed. During sleep, his feet, which stretch beyond the mattress tremble rythmically, a little before death. Picture of Coupeau dead regarded by Gervaise.

[*From* "Le Sublime" *a novel of the working classes, he, in fact, lifts several paragraphs almost word for word, chiefly those of political discussion among workingmen; above all he adopts the argot which Poulot has used, and amplifies it by use of a slang dictionary,* Dictionnaire de la langue verte, *by Alfred Delvau. He even makes up a little slang lexicon for his own immediate use; Massis has set down a list of some* 800 *colloquial expressions which Zola used not only in the dialogue of* L'Assommoir *but in his own description or comment. The whole book is permeated with argot.*]

THE PLANS

[*The work of documentation over, Zola now labors with great patience and determination over his plan, which he organizes out of the material in the Sketch and the Characters.*

He divides the matter of the novel into a certain number of chapters, and writes a "Summary" for each chapter, detailed but still very brief, of the action which is to take place.

Thereafter he develops from these brief outlines his "Detailed Plans," or "Analytical Plans," which resemble greatly the scenario of a play, or of a motion picture. Even these very last plans have two stages. They are not blue prints from which a building is cold-bloodedly erected. Everything is remodeled or altered as he goes in accordance with new exigencies or suggestions. Thus the original scheme of L'Assommoir *in* 21 *chapters is altered to* 13. *There was a "primitive" scenario and a "definitive" one.*

It will be noted, for instance, in the following "Summary" plan, that

Zola still thinks he is going to have a good deal of political talk in this novel, that he is still fascinated by the grave-digger, Bazouge, and means to have him play a considerable part, that he has Coupeau take to drink without any particular motive as yet; whereas, in the last analysis, he tones down the rôle of the grave-digger to a very delicate suggestion of the proximity of death, he later has Coupeau become severely injured and lose his ambition during the long convalescence, and drops political matter, to a great extent, entirely out of the book.

Some interesting ideas have occurred to him in the meantime; the idea of a melodramatic fight among the men, with knife-play, has been dropped in favor of the much more human incident of Coupeau, husband, becoming a friend of the former lover of Gervaise, Lantier, and their all living together in a ménage á trois! *Truer and more original solution, leading to an inevitable débâcle on the part of the woman.*]

PLAN IN BRIEF

Chapters of 20 pages, uneven in size, the shortest ten pages, the longest 30 pages.

The style in full flight.

The novel is to be the degeneration of Gervaise and Coupeau, the latter entraining the former, in the workers' quarter. Explain the customs of the people, their vices, their degeneration, the moral and physical ugliness induced by the milieu, by the conditions imposed on the workers in our society.

I. 1850, May. The abandonment. Scene in the wash-house. Return home. Mme. Fauconnier, Mme. Boche, Adèle Poisson. (The quarter in the morning.)

II. Meeting of Coupeau and Gervaise. At the wine merchant's (Colombe). (She wants to have nothing to do with him.) They come together. The Lorilleux, their portrait, their interior, their work. Bazouge (grave-digger) met with in the hallway. (The quarter at eleven o'clock P.M.)

III. 1850, 29th June. The marriage of Coupeau and Gervaise. Politics.

IV. Three first years of the couple together; birth of Anna. Coupeau's accident. Gervaise caring for him. The Goujets brought in here.

V. Bring in somewhere, the Gingerbread Fair, meeting with the Goujets. Acquaintance. Goujet finding Gervaise reasonable. The household gets on nicely. Politics. (*This chapter suppressed altogether later.*)

VI. 1855. Renting of the shop. The street. Father Bru. The Boches. Picture of them and their home. The Lorilleux angry. Coupeau begins to debauch himself. The café gains in influence. Gervaise slightly gourmand. Her courage. The work done by laundresses. Adèle reappears.

The proprietor, Marescot. A coal dealer, on the other side of the door. The other dealers. A word about Bazouge.

VII. First episode in the home of Bijard. Mme. Bijard works for Gervaise. Gervaise worries lest Coupeau become like Bijard.

VIII. Goujet at work. The forge.

IX. Gervaise's birthday. *Make her downfall very gradual.* Quarrel with the Lorilleux made up. *The street.* Adèle and her husband. Gervaise already slipping. The Boches. Politics. Bazouge invited. Happy still, no desire for death. Father Bru.

X. Lantier returns. All the characters mixed up. Coupeau speaks of settling accounts with Lantier. They go to Colombe's cafe. Coupeau brings Lantier home. The rearrangement of the house.

XI. Lantier installed. The worker dressed up. Politics. The shop consumed. The two men at Colombe's. Anna, her bad education. Quarrels with Mme. Coupeau. Goujet in love; his proposals. An escapade of Coupeau. Lantier takes Gervaise again; she submits. There the cafe-concert, or perhaps in another chapter.

XII. Pillage of the shop. Adèle Poisson on good terms with Gervaise and spying on the shop. Gervaise trying to reëstablish herself. Second Bijard episode.

XIII. Burial of Mme. Coupeau. The shop is completely eaten up, dirty. All the characters, Mme. Lérat, the Lorilleux, etc. The lease is given over. The Boches. Bazouge. Father Bru.

XIV. Gervaise in a tiny lodging. The quarter in the evening. (The boulevard as it is.) First days. She goes back to work for Mme. Fauconnier. She supports her husband. Anna's first communion. Anna as a child. . . . A conversation between the women on their husbands.

XV. . . . First hard winter to go through. Second Bijard episode (flat next to Gervaise). The proprietor Marescot. Gervaise going to find Coupeau at the cafe and sitting down with him. A new stage in her fall. The pawn-shop. Sensation of misery. A word about Father Bru. A rascality of Coupeau's that might be concerned with linen to be cleaned. Coupeau at the hospital.

XV. A country picnic with the Goujets, which does Gervaise some good.

XVI. Anna working at making artificial flowers, insolent with her parents, filthy words. She walks about the streets with other young people. The shop where the flowers are made. Mme. Lérat. (The working day, the hours.) Anna at a public dance, searched for by her father.

XVII. 67. Lantier in the home of the Poissons. (They attempt to throw Gervaise out.) He consumes the sweet-shop. Their home life. Adèle triumphant. (The spanking.) Politics. The policeman (his little boxes). A Sunday: the quarter including the Boulevard Ornano.

XVIII. Frightful winter. A single scene, broad, terrible. No bread. Debts. The Lorilleux refuse to lend a franc. Coupeau disappears, escapade. Anna has run away. Gervaise near prostitution, almost pushed to it by Coupeau. She gets drunk like him. Goujet meets her soliciting. (Father Bru. Bazouge. Gervaise longs for him.)

XIX. Third Bijard episode. Death of Lalie.

XX. The climax. Coupeau, Lantier, Goujet, the Lorilleux.

XXI. The final degradation of Gervaise. Her death. The last word of Bazouge.

[*Many of the indications for chapter divisions are as yet inadequate. The veritable climax, or progression, seems as yet undecided in the mind of the writer. It will form itself later, as Zola makes his "plan in detail," out of the return of Lantier, Gervaise Coupeau's first lover, to her present household. This event, combined with Coupeau's prodigious drinking, is surely calculated to bring on her ruin.*

I am able to cite here only three chapters from the plan in detail, using only the "definitive" project, and dropping the "primitive" form of these synopses. In any event, the manuscript notes do not contain all of the "primitive" scenarios, which indicate a slightly more intermediary stage; some of these were lost either by Zola or his heirs.

The "definitive" chapters which I cite are clearly more logical and restrained than the intermediary stage. The action is more crystallized; for instance, Chapter III "primitive" is about one-fourth as long or complete in its directions as Chapter II "definitive," which describes the marriage of Gervaise. In fact the marriage swells beyond all the proportions for it, and in its final form, stands out as a supremely humorous piece.

Again, Chapter VIII, "definitive," is a condensation of Chapter X and XI "primitive." Here the return of Lantier is described. He installs himself complacently, by easy stages, at the Coupeaus. He pays nothing. Seeing that Gervaise suffers from her drunken spouse, he makes approaches to her. She resists. Lonely, she permits him to take her to a café-concert one evening. Returning, she refuses to enter his room, adjoining hers; but her husband, arrived from a terrific bout, has rendered the whole bed-room so foul that she has no place to sleep, except with the boarder, Lantier! The turning point. *This determining episode is of course not discovered until the "definitive plan" is made.*]

PLAN IN DETAIL

CHAPTER I

Begin with a description of the room. Show Gervaise and the children in the hotel room. Lantier is there or arrives; he returns after having

spent the night out: a rapid picture of him. Fix the time of the scene. Arrival of Lantier and Gervaise in Paris, February, the beginning of the month; three months later; therefore May 1, 1850. The boulevard in the morning (short). The 1700 francs are spent. Lantier has only three francs left over from a party the night before, the few gifts he has made to Gervaise are at the pawn-shop. Reproaches. Given to understand that he prepares for flight, the trunk. Gervaise reproaches him, but gently; the two children. Lantier bored. He sends her to the pawn-shop with her last silk dress, anything to get some money; he has evidently spent the night with the woman he means to go away with. He comes back to get his clothes. Then Gervaise goes to do her washing; she is going to work for Mme. Fauconnier. Adèle and her sister indicated. The things Gervaise is to carry to the washing house; Lantier retains his shirts; the children's clothes she leaves at home; she is to return to prepare the lunch. In this first part do not give complete details about the facts preceding their arrival and stay in Paris; that will do for the conversation between Gervaise and Mme. Boche, in the washing house. Show Coupeau before the arrival of Lantier. He appears only at the door. "The old man isn't there?"—"No, M. Coupeau," and she tries to smile. He comes to speak to her about work; that will do.

As Gervaise is going to the washing-house, she meets Mme. Boche, who is going there also. Mme. Boche is a concierge in the street where I shall place my house, but at another number. They go along together (a word about the street, not much, the description later).

The washing-house. Description: the women, perhaps Mme. Bijard? Noise, odor, light, the individual places, arrange the setting. Mme. Boche and Gervaise are side by side; the conversation during the washing—(how they wash the wash); other women mixing in the conversation. Mme. Boche knows some scandal, her lodging is opposite Mme. Fauconnier's; she has seen Lantier at the home of Adèle and her sister; the sisters live together; the little one is a metal polisher, Adèle is a seamstress (or something else), no family. . . . Adèle comes to wash her little bundle, but she comes mainly to spy. She comes before the arrival of the children, sets to work, grins at Gervaise; it is then that Mme. Boche gives a few details in a veiled manner.

Arrival of the children with the key: "Well, where's papa?" He has left in a carriage (and a woman?). Gervaise, paling, continues to wash, damp, soak. Then the battle; pails of water thrown; the big Adèle and Gervaise taking each other by the hair, then using the beaters. Something very energetic and very dramatic, exaggerated. Finally Gervaise, wounded, her blood running, goes away, holding her two children by the hand. The room cleaned up, a second description, with the trunk gone, inventory, nothing more.

CHAPTER II

May, 1850. The rue des Poissonniers first (the exterior boulevard as it was then with the old slaughter-houses).

A week later, Gervaise and Coupeau together in the street. They meet each other while walking, at the end of the day. He has been permitted to come and wait for her as she leaves Mme. Fauconnier's; the two children are there. Then, in passing, "Look, there is the house where my sister lives. I eat there, but they have no room for me to sleep." The house, description in a few words. From there, they go to the boulevard. (Picture of the boulevard at the end of the working day, very complete.) Their conversation, Coupeau is in love, he wants to sleep with Gervaise, but she doesn't want to. What's the use? She must be serious. At that point, excuse her for the anisette that her mother made her drink (when Coupeau offers her something to drink) and for having had a child at fourteen years (when he presses her). By temperament tender and sympathetic, she is warm and passionate, but not very voluptuous; very reasonable, she dreams of working; her mother "Fine" in her, story of her family, the physiological question.

However, he offers her something and she accepts. At the door of a cafe on some big street (at Colombe's, short description of the shop). Coupeau; his family, his story (see his portrait). Description of the crowd; popular love-making under these conditions. Coupeau very nice. And then, the ideal of Gervaise: not to be beaten, to work, to eat, "to die in my bed, to bring up my children well," everything that she will not have. The children playing. Then the visit to the Lorilleux, giving me a chance to describe the inside of the house. The marriage is considered. Coupeau, almost decided, making experiments, however. He takes her one evening to the Lorilleux, after dinner. He comes for her after supper. The house lighted up; the evening, picture of the Lorilleux; disagreeable about some incident with regard to a marriage. Place them well.

Finally, on the stairs, make her meet Bazouge. Make the appearance of the grave-digger coincide with a word about happiness. Fright of Gervaise: "You will go the same way all the same." The appearance of Bazouge in the middle of laughter; keep him for the wedding if necessary. The Lorilleux on good terms with Bazouge, he tells them stories of grave-diggers. The house when they leave it, early in the evening; Gervaise turns around, looks at it; how it is at that hour.

CHAPTER III

(Gervaise very sweet and Coupeau very gay during the whole of the chapter. Filled with short descriptions.)

I pass rapidly by the account of the mairie and the church. (Begin with very short explanations.) Gervaise did not want a wedding, but Coupeau insists. One cannot get married so, they will all eat a bite together, a picnic, some friends and the family. They won't be foolish, and so he brings her around. (The question of money: bargaining for a cheap mass. Lorilleux furnishes the wedding-ring. Gervaise takes care of her own costume, the children, whatever they need to dress them properly.) The dinner is ordered at a wine-shop on the boulevard de la Chapelle (a name) at five francs a head, everything included. There is a little place for dancing in a narrow garden behind the wine-shop. (Coupeau invites Mes-Bottes.)

The day before, it has been decided that to fill up the afternoon, they would go for a walk out towards Saint-Denis. They could even take the train there. The rendez-vous is given at the wine-shop where they are to have dinner. Not everybody is to go to the mass and to the church.

At the mairie and at the church. The bride and groom (costume of Gervaise and Coupeau), the witnesses: Lorilleux and Boche (for Gervaise), M. Madinier and Bibi-la-Grillade (for Coupeau), Madame Coupeau. The two children stay with Mme. Boche, who is only coming in the evening. Madame Lorilleux refuses to come to the mairie or the church.

The meeting at the wine-shop. (They have a bite; Coupeau pays; "That's my treat.") Arrange everybody. Mes Bottes does not appear, he has gone to Saint-Denis; I shall show him in the evening, coming back. It is then that the storm breaks. The women are annoyed, it is impossible to go to the country. They cannot be gay, but they must not be bores.

Only sketch the characters and place them. Someone suggests going to the Museum. (How they go.) Gervaise has never been to see it. So they go, not everybody: Gervaise, Coupeau, Lorilleux, Boche, Mlle. Remanjou, M. Madinier, Bibi-la-Grillade, Mme. Lérat, Mme. Fauconnier, Mme. Lorilleux, Mme. Bougron and her husband. The attitude of these people; at four o'clock they have to leave. A conversation between the Lorilleux against Gervaise; give the dramatic side. ("This Gervaise has no family . . ." pauper, the wedding ring.) Divide the characters into two camps. Paris, the summertime, the rain. The Lorilleux explain the money question: Coupeau has had to borrow a hundred francs of them.

They are embarrassed; they still have three hours. Then they walk along the quays (busy them with all sorts of things). They cross the Tuileries, come to the Place Vendôme, climb up the column (Paris in the rain), etc., and return for dinner. Coupeau scared of the Lorilleux. (Conversation about the future: Gervaise and Coupeau.)

The dinner. The children and Mme. Boche (the little ones dressed up for the wedding). Gervaise embraces the children when she comes.

"Have you been good?" (The Lorilleux smirk.) Mes Bottes arrives when everybody is at table. The dinner; how everyone is seated. Conversation, at this point, on politics. Lorilleux conservative, his story; Coupeau skeptic and jokester: farce. All the characters. Relapse to drunkenness, but slight, gradually, on such a day, however, it is permitted to drink a little. A word for everyone according to his character, the children. Lorilleux speaks of his work (jewelers used to carry a sword). Conversation on the future.)

However, the room gives on a dance floor. They have promised not to become too gay; but after dinner, pipes are lit, liqueurs are ordered, some want to sing; only the others prefer to go downstairs and dance, just a little, not much (avoiding the encores).

Then they leave the guests there. Madame Boche takes the two children. Coupeau and Gervaise have not yet been able to rent a place; they return to Gervaise's room at the Hotel Boncoeur. The Lorilleux accompany them, then they accompany the Lorilleux home. Episode with Bazouge at the door; Bazouge very drunk; he speaks of his dead, he frightens Gervaise, who has been very gay up to now. A typical word from him: "You will pass on just the same, little one, and perhaps you'll be just as glad to be carried away. We let a lot of people out of their misery." (Less philosophical.)

That night they go to bed without a cent.

[*Having made his plans in their final form, Zola would depart from them very slightly. When he begins to write, he must know in what direction he is going. He has a horror of pausing in uncertainty. For the mass of detail which he desires to accumulate in his books there must be organization, else he would remain tongue-tied forever. His style is vigorous; almost impersonal, save in its reflections by choice of material, he moves forward steadily, making few changes, without looking back over his shoulder. The* mot juste *does not trouble him. He never hesitates because all his material has resolved itself in his mind in a final form. The preparatory stage has absorbed by far the greater part of the year which he devotes to his novel.*

Zola appears a terribly methodical man. Is it his documentation that furnishes the greatness of L'Assommoir? *We know, on the contrary, that his observation was highly arbitrary; that he got facts from sources often which were very suspect. As to his plans, they are neither* experimental *nor scientific. Poor plans! What if he had stopped at them only? It is the realization of these "documents" and of these "plans" which is the curious and impressive fact. To document himself, to observe on the field, was clearly a foible of his, a trick that stirred him to greater*

artistic deeds, a fashion that gave him the feeling that he was keeping abreast of modern science. In reality, no matter how much he observes, he invents *more. His action, in* L'Assommoir, *is a "scientific experiment carried along in the full flight of the imagination." Hence the superiority of* L'Assommoir *to* Pot-Bouille, *for instance, in which imagination is almost nil, in which he is dully carrying out the theory of the "experimental novel" propounded post-factum.*

The social novel, roman de moeurs, *as Zola conceived it, involved the mastery of a great many facts, a great deal of historical or rational knowledge even, in order to arrive at the proper judgments. (These judgments once disproved, the novel too must disappear, in ratio to its lack of artistic character.) At any rate Zola must needs find a method of organizing this vast material so that it could be fused into a literary form. Even Zola's superior engineering could not always achieve this end as witness* La Débâcle, *a series of historical episodes, exact, but at the loss of all literary unity.*

Zola willed to leave us his plans and notes, as a military hero would leave us his charts and maps of successful campaigns.

The problem, the mystery, nevertheless, remains of the creative effort which puffs breath into these figures of a plan, and energy or drama into these movements of a scenario. Most of us having such plans all set up would probably abandon the effort of carrying them out. We know even that Zola was a romantic, a lyrical temperament, capable of great emotivity. It is as a counterfoil to the "flood of ideas which would surge into his mind and choke all activity" that he no doubt erected his whole system. He understood and guarded himself superbly; he understood also, that he would not be dismayed by his "plans"; that he possessed the indomitable will to carry them out.]

SOURCES

One must indeed have sang-froid in the modern era of the printing press. The flood-tide will eventually accomplish a literate darkness as effectual as that of the Middle Ages. . . . At any rate it is as a combination of *Real-Politiker*, and modern sleuth, as well as literary scientist, that the historian must pursue today the "truth" of his period or subject. Truth? Often, in a society which still vibrates with the echoes of a nearby past, a murmured word, a discreet hint or regard is clue enough to send one upon an exultant trail across the sea of pamphlets, books, newspaper files, court-records. And from such fortunate exploration the hunter returns mysterious, diffident, but with more triumphant certitudes than all the encyclopedias may divulge. . . .

That the present age is only dimly aware of its distance already from the Second Empire and the early Third Republic (the whole epoch roughly from 1856 to 1898), is indicated by the absence virtually of any authoritative work on the period, despite the fact that a complete bibliography of material dealing with Emile Zola alone would run into thousands of titles.

Le Groupe de Médan, by Léon Deffoux and Emile Zavie (Paris, 1924), which treats of Zola, in part, only, and chiefly of his friends, is the only unantiquated work; simultaneously, a piece of brilliant satirical writing and precise scholarship. M. Léon Deffoux, a great authority on the Naturalist period, and of an unwavering memory, furnished incalculable aid to the present biographer.

Emile Zola has left us, as direct documents, two published volumes of correspondence, *Lettres de Jeunesse*, and *Les Lettres et les Arts* (1907-1908). His essays and newspaper articles, from *Mes Haines* (1865), to *La Verité en Marche* (1901), compose nine more volumes of testimony and memoirs. Aside from these, unpublished letters are still to be discovered on all hands either in the possession of the Zolaïsts or of dealers. There are, moreover, the ninety volumes of manuscript and notes donated to the Bibliothèque Nationale, by Mme. Zola, which furnishes a singular record of artistic peregrination over thirty years. And, strangely preserved for us, in the *Enquête Medico-psychologique d'Emile Zola*, by Dr. Toulouse, are all his measurements, infirmities, description

of his organs, psychological habits—he had in fact bequeathed his brain to Science!

As to the biographies, there exists, for a variety of reasons, no one complete, unflinching, or disinterested account of Zola's life. The first ones began to appear when he was scarcely turned forty! A rare and little known pamphlet by Guy de Maupassant, *Célébrités Contemporaines*: *Emile Zola* (1878), which is not even included in Maupassant's Complete Works, must be among the first, and is composed of the elder novelist's recollections.

More ambitious is Paul Alexis' *Emile Zola, Notes d'un Ami,* issued together with hitherto unpublished poems in 1882. Written by Zola's compatriot of Aix and devoted camp-follower, it is both revealing and deceptive by turns, and covers only the first forty years. Thenceforth, a deluge of "interviews," small monographs, and in the time of the Dreyfus Campaigns, anything from handbills to whole volumes or newspapers pro and con, abuse and adulation. Various works, such as A. Laporte's *Flores Pornographiques* (1897), attempt to show Zola as a monster and a degenerate. They seldom live up to one's hopes.

It was not until 1908 that Edmond Lepelletier's *Vie d'Emile Zola,* the only "complete" biography in French appeared. The very name of Zola is associated with the most painful social convulsions in the popular mind; and it is no coincidence that Lepelletier, a former anti-Dreyfusard, is chosen to write this 500 page opus, which although adoring the man, brims over with sentimental peripatetics, with historical and literary inaccuracies, and leaves us little that is nourishing.

The material in English is not imposing. One of the earliest works is that of R. H. Sherard, which appeared prior to the Dreyfus Affair ("Emile Zola," London, 1897); therefore incomplete. More well-meaning, and chronological, if misguided, is the long "Emile Zola, Novelist and Reformer," by E. A. Vizetelly, Zola's English translator, which appeared in 1904, shortly after the hero's death.

The most distinguished work in English is the penetrating, and unexpectedly approving monograph by Henry James, in his "Notes on Novelists," which appeared in 1902.

A vast source of secret information and scandal about the giants of the Nineteenth Century whose importance to present and future generations one can only speculate upon, still remains closed in the suppressed volumes of the Goncourt Memoirs. The nine published volumes of the *Journal* by Edmond de Goncourt and by his brother, Jules (up to the latter's death in 1870), were issued between 1887 and 1896. They form a colossal storehouse of the manners, morals, conversations of virtually all the celebrities who lived or passed through Paris between

1854 and 1895 (!). They compose also a monument to the egregious vanity of Edmond de Goncourt at least. The voluminous notes on Zola—many of which appearing during his lifetime did not help to cement a friendship, wavering at best—are at times unsparing enough. Vivid personal testimony, and always questionable, which I have sought to use with discrimination.

By the terms of Edmond de Goncourt's will, the unpublished memoirs were to appear twenty years after his death in the discretion of his heirs, who were, as we know, the then founded Academy Goncourt. This period expired during the World War, and when, shortly after the war, a clamor arose for publication of the secret memoirs, two important literary personages were chosen to read the document through together, and decide what action should be taken. They returned with blanched faces and sealed lips: Publication would invite a kind of guerilla warfare in society, with a wake of disgraced homes, broken hearts, duels. The manuscript was sealed up for at least another generation.

Will our conception of Zola be further disturbed or dislodged in such an event?

I can say only that I hope not. In completing my picture of the personal life of my hero, hastening from the friends to the enemies of Zola by turns, it was my good fortune, also, to see certain secret documents. . . . I have the conviction, then, that Goncourt, when he is exhumed, will appear to have practiced upon his friends, in particular, the kind of hard-hearted revelations which the realists practiced on society in general. It may appear thus, that what were bombshells to Goncourt in the past century is simply material which one feels capable of offering in all innocence and candor in 1928!

Memoirs, personal relations, are indeed our surest guide to the sense and the atmosphere of an epoch. The most helpful ones I was able to discover, aside from the Goncourts, were Alphonse Daudet's *Mes Trente Ans à Paris*, Edmondo de Amicis, *Souvenirs de Paris et de Londres*, and Maurice Dreyfous, *Ce qu'il me reste à dire*—all touching on the earlier period and on the friends of Zola. Fragments of memories by the curious Henry Céard, Zola's intimate, were to be found here and there in newspapers and old magazines. A strange collection of the hundreds of cartoons and lampoons against Zola arrived in part in the hands of the late John Grand-Carteret, whose *Zola en Images* (1908), a work of iconography on the whole period up to the Dreyfus Affair, I was able to use through the courtesy of his publishers, La Renaissance du Livre, Paris.

For the Dreyfus Affair, the material is vast and strangely disordered. The monumental work remains that of a partisan, Joseph Reinach's

History, in six stout volumes, Paris, 1903-1908. A leader in the battle, Reinach's account is virtually day-to-day and surcharged with incontrovertible testimony, worthy of a high-pressure detective bureau, which in fact he did conduct in behalf of the cause. Nothing, since, has in fact been written to withstand the case he makes. Memoirs of the period, by Jean Jaurès, Sévérine, Léon Daudet, Ernest Vaughan, pro and con, newspapers teeming still with the story, but confusing enough, were easily available. The newspapers (the *Figaro* for instance, ever since its foundation seventy years ago down to today), covering the whole nineteenth century, are the prospector's uneasy Paradise. For the unbroken files of these alone the Bibliothèque Nationale must be blessed.

THE WORKS OF EMILE ZOLA

1864—Contes à Ninon (Hetzel & Lacroix).
1865—La Confession de Claude (Lacroix et Verbroeckhoven).
1866—Le Voeu d'une Morte (Faure)—Mes Haines (Faure, and in 1879, by Charpentier)—Mon Salon (Librairie Centrale).
1867—Les Mystères de Marseilles (Arnaud, Marseilles)—Thérèse Raquin (Lacroix et Verbroeckhoven)—Edouard Manet (Dentu).
1868—Madeleine Férat (Lacroix et Verbroeckhoven).
1871—La Fortune des Rougon (Lacroix et Verbroeckhoven).
1872—La Curée (Lacroix et Verbroeckhoven).
1873—Le Ventre de Paris (Charpentier). Thérèse Raquin, a play (Charpentier).*
1874—La Conquête de Plassans—Nouveaux Contes à Ninon—Les Héritiers Rabourdin, a play.
1875—La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret.
1876—Son Excellence Eugène Rougon.
1877—L'Assommoir.
1878—Une Page d'Amour—Plays—Le Bouton de Rose (comedy).
1879—La République Française et la Littérature.
1880—Nana—Le Roman Expérimental—Les Soirées de Médan (in collaboration with Maupassant, Huysmans, Alexis, Céard and Hennique).
1881—Documents Littéraires—Le Naturalisme au Théatre—Nos Auteurs Dramatiques—Les Romanciers Naturalistes—Une Campagne (all critical work).
1882—Pot Bouille—Le Capitaine Burle—Unpublished Poems (in Alexis' Emile Zola, Notes d'un Ami).
1883—Au Bonheur des Dames.
1884—La Joie de Vivre—Naïs Micoulin—Preface au Catalogue de Manet.
1885—Germinal.
1886—L'Oeuvre—Three Prefaces for the plays made by W. Busnach from *Nana, L'Assommoir,* and *Pot-Bouille.*
1887—La Terre—Renée (tragedy)—Le Ventre de Paris (play, in collaboration with Busnach).

* Henceforth all books published by Charpentier.

1888—Le Rêve.
1890—La Bête Humaine.
1891—L'Argent—Les Types de Paris (with Huysmans, Maupassant, Goncourt, Bourget, etc.).
1892—La Débâcle.
1893—Le Docteur Pascal—Discours aux Etudiants (Lecture).
1894—Lourdes.
1896—Rome—Nouvelle Campagne (Essays).
1897—Lettre à la Jeunesse (Dreyfus Affair)—Messidor (lyrical drama).
1898—Paris—Lettre à la France—Lettre à M. Félix Faure, Président de la République (J'accuse).
1899—Fécondité.
1901—Travail—La Vérité en Marche (Essays on Dreyfus Affair)—L'Ouragan (Libretto).
1902—Vérité.
1905—L'Enfant Roi (Libretto).
1907-8—Correspondance; Vol. 1, Lettres de Jeunesse; Vol. 2, Les Lettres et les Arts.

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